



GLORIES  
OF  
UTTAR PRADESH

DR. NANDALAL CHATTERJI  
M.A., PH.D., D.LITT.

PUBLICATIONS BUREAU  
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## P R E F A C E

To Uttar Pradesh belongs the pride of a past which rolls back to the very beginnings of Indian civilization, but its history and architectural monuments have not received the attention they richly deserve. The following pages make a pioneer attempt at describing the glories of Uttar Pradesh from the standpoint of a historian. Though the architecture and antiquities of Uttar Pradesh have been studied before, the present work happens to be the first endeavour to cover in one volume and in detail the different phases of the life and art of this State.

My object has been to show how India is truly mirrored and summed up in Uttar Pradesh as probably in no other region, and also how it is the veritable pivot of Indian civilization and heart land of Indo-Islamic culture. The matters I have dealt with are either not usually brought to our attention, or are touched on from such a purely technical point of view that they lose their human interest. And yet these are the very essence of the glorious heritage of Uttar Pradesh. In presenting a panoramic picture of the glories of Uttar Pradesh, I have tried to open up a new and lively line of presentation, believing, as I do, that literary form is essential to a graphic portraiture of the past. I have scrupulously avoided the dull and matter-of-fact style of a history book or a gazetteer, and have ventured to write in a manner which will give a bird's-eye view of all that is really great in Uttar Pradesh.

It is not unlikely that in a work of this kind, I may not have always succeeded in describing things picturesquely or adequately in spite of my best efforts. I shall be obliged, if readers will kindly call my attention to any imperfections

that they may chance to notice. I shall, however, consider my labours amply rewarded, if the work proves to be of some interest to those for whom it is intended.

I take this opportunity of expressing my deep sense of gratitude to the Government of Uttar Pradesh for the liberal patronage this work has been vouchsafed. I am extremely grateful to Dr. Sampurnanand, Chief Minister, Uttar Pradesh, for his kind patronage. I am obliged to all the members of the U. P. Cabinet, of whom Sri C. B. Gupta and Sri Kamalapati Tripathi have been specially interested in my work. The Chiefs of the Information Department have been very helpful, and I have pleasure in recording my obligations to Sri Govind Narayan, Sri B. S. Singh, Sri B. P. Mishra, Sri A. J. Zaidi and Kumari Sarla Sahney. Sri S. U. Umar of the Information Department has helped me in seeing the book through the press.

THE UNIVERSITY,

LUCKNOW

1957

NANDALAL CHATTERJI

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## CULTURAL HERITAGE

The history of the life and culture of Uttar Pradesh has not received the attention it richly deserves by reason of its antiquity, no less than its varied development and cultural greatness. Indeed, Uttar Pradesh has from time immemorial been the seat of a culture which is one of the most precious legacies of Indian civilization. The pride of place among the various regions belongs to Uttar Pradesh which has the most historical ancient sites. A number of reasons account for the lack of special attention to the history of Uttar Pradesh. First, the history of the region has been part and parcel of the history of Hindustan as a whole and so special or separate attention has not been paid to its history on a mere regional basis. Second, the territorial limits of the region have varied from age to age, and it has never been a fixed geographical unit. Third, the nature of its soil and climate did not favour the adequate preservation of prehistoric and ancient relics. Lastly, historical research has not yet made sufficient progress in this State.

### HOARY PAST

To this heart-region of India and of Indian history belongs the glory of a past which rolls back to the very beginnings of civilization, for the Gangetic valley was one of the cradles of ancient Indian civilization. The archaeologist has only just begun to realize the fact, and even from what little has been brought to light by excavations, one is convinced that Uttar Pradesh perhaps constituted the missing link between the Indus civilization and the Vedic Age. That, for instance, the historic city of Varanasi, the immortal seat of learning, may be older than Mohen-jo-Daro, Ur, Babylon, Nineveh or Memphis is a fact which is hardly realized by the average student of Indian History. The hoary antiquity of Varanasi is still recalled in popular legend which carries back human imagination to the remotest past. Resplendent in its own glories, Uttar Pradesh has throughout

its recorded history been the scene of a cultural efflorescence which has moulded the culture of the entire sub-continent. India, in fact, has been mirrored and summed up in Uttar Pradesh as probably in no other region.

Uttar Pradesh which was the Madhya Desh of the ancient times was the pivot of Indian civilization for untold centuries prior to the advent of the Aryans. The connexion between the Indus civilization and that of the Gangetic valley is being explored and it is likely that before long the spade of the archaeologist will reveal the missing link. There is reason to believe that Uttar Pradesh may have been the fountain head of what to-day is termed the Indus civilization. With the Aryanization of the country, Uttar Pradesh became not only the Holy Land of India, but the seat of mighty powers like Hastinapur, Panchala, Mathura, Kosala, Kausambi, Prayag and Kashi.

Hastinapur, near Delhi and Meerut, was the Capital city of the Kurus, a well-known tribe which is mentioned in the Vedic Literature. The Kurus lived in Kurukshtera which was the headquarters of Brahmanical culture. The Brahmins here were the most celebrated, and its kings were models of what a king ought to be. Panchala, near Bareilly, was not far from the land of the Kurus. The first part of the name of Panchala indicates that the country was formed by the union of five tribes. They are said to have been formerly called the Krivis. They were worthy neighbours and allies of the Kurus, and were famous throughout the country. Mathura, an important metropolis and centre of art, architecture and sculpture, was the seat of the Surasenas who were a republican people. Kosala which corresponds to modern Avadh had a great past, and its celebrated ruler, Parasenajit, traced his descent from the Vedic hero, Ikshvaku. Its most important city was Ayodhya.

#### CENTRE OF ARYAN CULTURE

Kausambi, situated near Allahabad, was another fine city, and its rulers, the Vatsas, were known all over India as the distinguished descendants of the Old Bharata family. One of its kings, Udayana, and his queen Vasavdatta, are

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immortalized in Sanskrit dramas. Prayag which is modern Allahabad was an equally famous city in ancient India. It was the great nerve centre of Hindus, second only to Varanasi. Prayag was ruled by different dynasties from time to time. In the period of the Mauryas and the Guptas, it was a very important strategic centre. Kashi which is the later Varanasi was the capital of a great kingdom of the same name. Its king, Ajatsatru, was a powerful ruler of ancient times, and he was a great patron of learning and philosophy.

The entire region of Uttar Pradesh came to be looked upon as the heart of Aryan culture, and the nursery of Hindu philosophy and the Vedas and the Vedantas. The great religious reform movements of ancient India, ushered in by Gautama Buddha, received its earliest impetus from Uttar Pradesh. Buddha turned the wheel of *dharma* at Sarnath where he preached his first sermon to his five disciples. Buddha's death too occurred in Kusinagar, near Gorakhpur, the capital of the Mallas, a republican people. Thus, Uttar Pradesh could become the real headquarters of Buddhism—an honour which continued for several centuries.

The rise of Buddhism symbolized the tendency towards religious reform and synthesis and the zeal for spiritual syncretism which have always marked the culture of Uttar Pradesh. Great spiritual leaders sprang up in this area who promoted the ideal of synthesis. A sanctuary of diverse cults, our State has always held aloft the ideal of tolerance. The unique catholicism and humanism of Uttar Pradesh constitute a chapter of Indian culture which has not yet been fully studied.

### A RICH LEGACY

One of the richest legacies of ancient Uttar Pradesh has been its liberal and enlightened patronage of art, literature and of culture in the widest sense of the term. And, throughout the ancient period, its cities were far-famed centres of learning and thought. Kashi, Prayag, Ayodhya, Kausambi or Mathura had a status which was unrivalled. It is a pity that the splendours of ancient art and architecture of this State has disappeared, but what little has survived

will reflect the highest traditions of India's artistic genius. As for learning, Uttar Pradesh was the metropolis of Aryavarta and the repository of Indian thought. One cannot think of ancient Indian learning and education without visualizing the forest hermitages like the Naimisharanya. This tradition of cultural leadership was kept up even in later ages down to the advent of the Muslims. Our State can justly be proud of the intellectual leadership which it enjoyed for centuries. The rest of India was led and inspired by what the thought-leaders of this State produced in the realm of learning. Despite ceaseless political turmoils and the rise and fall of kingdoms, Uttar Pradesh did not lose its cultural hegemony.

Uttar Pradesh rose to prominence also in the later ancient period when different empires arose on its soil. The Maukharis of Kanauj achieved greatness in the sixth century, and held their own against the Guptas of Magadha. The city under them attained an eminence which equalled the glories of Ujjain and Pataliputra. But, the real glory of Kanauj was to have produced a national saviour in Ishanvarma who stopped the Hunas and saved the integrity of India. And, it was in Harsha's time that Kanauj became the metropolis of a great empire. Kanauj got its primacy once again under Yaseverman in the eighth century. He was the patron of the great dramatist, Bhavabhuti. Then, Nagabhata II, the renowned head of the Gurjara Pratihara empire, made Kanauj an imperial city. The Gurjara Pratiharas of Kanauj have a real claim to be in the direct tradition of the Mauryas, Vakatakas and Guptas of old. Under Mihir Bhoja, one of the greatest rulers in Indian history, Kanauj again reached its peak of fame, and the whole of Hindustan was ruled from Kanauj.

#### SEAT OF CULTURAL SYNTHESIS

In medieval times, Uttar Pradesh was the centre of great Muslim empires, including the Mughal Empire, and, as such it continued to enjoy the headship of India to an extent which is not fully realized to-day. The region became so cosmopolitan that it could not be a mere province. Jaunpur became the Shiraz of India, and Agra was the imperial

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metropolis of the Great Mughals. The tradition of a broad outlook grew up as the distinctive feature of the culture of the region. Of all the Subahs of the Sultanate and of the Mughal Empire, Uttar Pradesh area was the least Provincial. So, an insular or parochial outlook could never grow in this region. This catholicity is well illustrated by the absence of a distinctive regional name until our own times. Uttar Pradesh was India in the real sense of the term. It never degenerated into a mere local unit.

It was in Uttar Pradesh that medieval India's cultural synthesis took place in society, religion, art and literature. Cultural assimilation continued throughout Muslim rule, and liberal rulers like Akbar, the Great Nation-builder, purposely encouraged, and even accelerated this process of fusion. It was here, as nowhere else in India, that the Hindu mind responded to the impact of Islamic thought. Hindu thinkers and saints shaped their spiritual consciousness into models inspired by Muslim ideas. Muslim Sufis and sects drew their inspiration from Hindu thought and philosophy. This mutual interaction led to a study of each other's religion, and exercised a potent influence on the cultural life of India as a whole.

The religious movements of medieval India are seen at their best in Uttar Pradesh. It is indeed highly significant that Guru Gorakhnath held that "*the sword which Muhammad wielded was not of iron, but of spiritual love*", and that he admitted both Muslims and Hindus as his disciples. Ramananda, a Vaishnava sanyasi, was born in Allahabad. He led a great religious movement and preached Bhakti to God. He settled later at Varanasi where he found numerous disciples among whom the greatest was Kabir. Kabir popularized a virile monotheism and taught his disciples to make an absolute surrender to God. His teachings were a new adaptation of Hinduism in terms of Islam's egalitarianism. He became an apostle of communal unity, and even though he was born a Muslim, he freely accepted the spiritual guidance of a Hindu. Religious teachers like Baba Farid, Rajjab, Yari Sahib and Darya Sahib carried on the work which Kabir had begun. Tulsidas was the greatest poet-saint of medieval India. It was he who interpreted Hinduism as a dynamic conception of devotional

life. He was a great mystic and his Ramayana turned men's minds to the glory of action as against the glory of surrender. The names of Akbar and Dara Shikoh stand pre-eminent among the princely advocates of Indo-Islamic cultural *rapprochement*.

#### ART AND LITERATURE

It was in Uttar Pradesh that cultural fusion reached its high-mark in the domain of art and literature and it was the flood-gates of artistic and literary effort in this region which opened up new channels for the flow of artistic genius. The Taj of Agra is the masterpiece of Indo-Islamic architecture, and it formed the veritable culmination of artistic synthesis. Similarly, in the literary works of Hindus and Muslims we note the same process of synthesis. Hindi grew up under Muslim patronage in a manner which is indicative of linguistic harmony and give-and-take. Urdu was another literary contribution of Uttar Pradesh. In social life also Uttar Pradesh set the fashion, and enjoyed a well-deserved leadership. Hindus and Muslims of all other parts of India drew their inspiration from this region. Even a casual survey of such social and cultural fusions leaves no doubt about the fact that men of dissimilar faiths evolved a common platform and thereby laid the foundations of Hindustani culture which is still alive.

Even when Muslim rule declined with the break-up of the great Mughal Empire, Uttar Pradesh kept up its cultural traditions in the midst of political changes and revolutions. The torch of cultural leadership was held aloft by the rulers of Avadh whose contributions to the cultural life of India have yet to be fully weighed. In the surrounding sea of political decomposition, Avadh remained for long a bed-rock of cultural greatness, and cultural leadership had shifted from Delhi to Lucknow. The art and architecture of Lucknow and Faizabad may not be as grand and exquisite as those of Delhi and Agra, yet they kept alive the old traditions somehow and preserved them from utter destruction. The Nawabs of Avadh maintained the cultural hegemony of Uttar Pradesh intact. Lucknow remained the seat of Indo-Islamic culture in India until its annexation by the British.

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With the advent of British rule in the modern age, Uttar Pradesh entered on a chequered period of its history. Having started late in the field of Western education, it could not progress as fast as the coastal regions of India did. Yet, the part it played in the Great Rebellion of 1857 is memorable. The Rebellion had its main leaders from Uttar Pradesh, and its chief centres were also in Uttar Pradesh. Rani Lakshmi Bai of Jhansi was the greatest leader of the Rebellion, and her name is rightly cherished as the most illustrious woman patriot of Uttar Pradesh. Nana Sahib, Azimulla Khan, Khan Bahadur Khan and the Begam of Avadh are also great names immortalized by the Rebellion. Despite its failure, the movement prepared the ground for the rise of the subsequent nationalist upsurge in India. Uttar Pradesh showed the way, and the rest of India followed 1857 and after.

### BRITISH PERIOD

When British rule was well-founded, the State acquired its present settled shape through territorial adjustments. The State once again became a seat of culture and enlightenment. The culture of the old Aryavarta gradually rose again phoenix-like out of its ashes, and to-day the State is fast assuming the role of a pioneer in various spheres of social, educational and administrative reform.

Muslim renaissance was born in modern Uttar Pradesh. Its pioneer, Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan (1817-98), the Grand Old Man of Aligarh, started the regeneration of the Muslims through English education. He founded the M. A. O. College at Aligarh in 1875, and gave the city a missionary importance. The Aligarh movement, which is the prime factor of Islamic movement in Modern India, became the first step towards the integration of Indian Islam.

It was in the field of education that Uttar Pradesh made the most significant progress in modern times. New universities came into being one after another and established new traditions. The Allahabad University gave a new impetus to higher education in Uttar Pradesh in the last century. The Canning College at Lucknow, the M. A. O. College at Aligarh, the Agra College at Agra, the Central

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Hindu College and the Queen's College at Varanasi and the Muir Central College at Allahabad established the higher academic traditions in this State. The creation of unitary universities in Allahabad, Lucknow, Varanasi and Aligarh made the pace of educational development in Uttar Pradesh extremely rapid and almost revolutionary. The University of Agra relieved the old Allahabad University of its far-flung mufassil jurisdiction.

In literature, Uttar Pradesh has made a noteworthy progress in modern times. The bifurcation of Hindustani into Urdu and Hindi reacted on the cultural life of this region. Both Urdu and Hindi found a new orientation and a fuller and richer content. Ghalib, Hali, Azad, Sarshar, Zakaullah and Nazir Ahmad rendered great service to Urdu during the last century, just as writers like Harish Chandra left an indelible mark on Hindi literature. In the recent times, Urdu has been enriched by literary giants like Shibli Numani, Sharar, Akbar, Prem Chand and others. Hindi has produced numerous writers of distinction since the days of Maithilisharan, Sumitranandan, Nirala and Mahadevi.

### FREEDOM MOVEMENT

The role that Uttar Pradesh played in India's freedom movement both before and after the advent of Mahatma Gandhi is memorable. In the earlier days of the Congress, our State produced leaders of the stature of Ayodhya Nath, Ganga Prasad, Sunder Lal, Wazir Hasan, Moti Lal Nehru and Madan Mohan Malaviya. In recent times, the crowning glory of Uttar Pradesh has been to have produced Jawahar Lal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of Free India. The greatness of Uttar Pradesh is epitomized in Jawahar Lal.

After the advent of Gandhi, Uttar Pradesh took a leading part in the non-co-operation movement and made sacrifices in the cause of the country, which form a glorious chapter in the history of India's national struggle. Uttar Pradesh made history in the 1942 movement in which the students also took a memorable part.

Since the achievement of freedom, Uttar Pradesh which forms the biggest State in the Indian Union has made an

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all-round progress in every direction. The State bids fair to be the model one in the whole country. Its patriots and leaders of whom there are legions have truly adorned the national life of India and have raised our motherland in the estimation of the whole world.

Even a cursory survey of the history of Uttar Pradesh would serve to show that no other region of India could excel it in catholicity, freedom from a narrow parochial outlook, cultural synthesis and in patriotic zeal. The contributions of Uttar Pradesh to the sum total of Indian culture and civilization are of the highest magnitude. Uttar Pradesh "Zindabad".

## BUDDHIST SITES

Gautama Buddha, whose gospel marked the greatest revolution in the religious life of Asia in the sixth century B. C. and whose religion even after the lapse of two thousand and five hundred years is still professed by one-third of the world's total population, has left his abiding foot-prints on the land of Uttar Pradesh. Buddhism was a memorable turning point in the history of Uttar Pradesh and that of India and Asia as well. Most of the sacred sites of Buddhism are to be found here and they are held in special veneration on account of their great historical value. The Buddha was born in the Lumbini grove which is now in Nepal in the immediate vicinity of Uttar Pradesh. He preached his first sermon and proclaimed the Wheel of Law at Sarnath, near Varanasi Sravasti, the capital of Kosala, was the scene of the greatest miracle that the Buddha was called upon to perform. Sankasya, in the district of Etah, is a holy spot unforgettably connected with another thrilling miracle that occurred in the life of the Blessed One. And, it was at Kusinagar, in the district of Gorakhpur, that the Buddha finally passed into Nirvana. Uttar Pradesh is thus intimately associated with the eventful life and legend of the Master.

### LUMBINI

Among the hallowed centres of Buddhism, Lumbini, where the Master was born, ranks first. It has been identified with Rummindai which lies inside Nepal on the outskirts of the district of Basia. It is accessible from Naujanwa, a station on the North-Eastern Railway, ten miles away. Lumbini is a romantic place which was included at the time of the Buddha in the little State of Kapilavastu, ruled by the royal family of the Sakya clan. The garden which marks the place of the Nativity of the Buddha has continued to be one of the most prominent themes in Indian sculpture and painting.

Here still stands an Asokan pillar which serves to commemorate the Emperor's pilgrimage to the sacred site in

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the twentieth year after his coronation. The inscription which says that the Buddha was born here definitely locates the site of the Lumbini garden and sets all doubts about its identity at rest. Because of its sanctity, the place rapidly grew into a prosperous city. The famous Chinese traveller, Hiuen Tsang, visited this place and calls it La-fa-ni Grove. He has left glowing details about the buildings which he saw here. Near the pillar, there is an old shrine bearing a representation of the Nativity of the Master in the manner in which it is described in the Buddhist texts. The Nepal Government carried out partial excavations at the site some years ago, but the results thereof are not yet known.

### SARNATH

Sarnath or Saranganath (Lord of the Deer) which lies some four miles to the north of Varanasi is the birthplace of Buddhism. It has been immortalized by the Buddhist texts under the name of Rishipatana or Mrigadava where the Dharmachakra (Wheel of Law) was first turned by the Master in the year 528 b. c. In other words, it was here that the Buddha preached his first sermon to his five former associates.

The sermon which he delivered here was evidently based on the supreme knowledge he had gained at Uruvilva, near Gaya. It emphasized the middle path which leads to salvation. This path stands for the great eight-fold way of life—right views, right aspirations, right speech, right conduct, right livelihood, right exertions, right mindfulness and right contemplation. Besides, the Buddha explained the supreme knowledge, the knowledge of the chain of causation, and of the four-fold truths, namely suffering, the causes of suffering, the conquest of suffering and the path that makes this conquest possible. This sermon heralded the Rule of Law and thereby set the Wheel of Law in motion.

There is picturesque legend about Sarnath, which is well worth a recapitulation. In one of his previous births, the Buddha was the master of a herd of deer in a forest where Sarnath was later founded. Once the ruler of Varanasi came there for a hunt, and began killing the deer. The Bodhisattva Buddha implored him not to kill the animals

indiscriminately, and volunteered to send a deer every day. The king accepted the proposal and went away. After this a deer was regularly sent to him each day. Among the herd there was a pregnant doe, and when her turn came, she protested that she could not allow an unborn child to be killed. The Bodhisattva was touched, and so he went to offer himself in her place. At this, the King was so much moved that he at once ordered the stoppage of the killing of the deer. Thereafter the forest was left for the exclusive use of the deer, and was accordingly called the Deer Park.

In the first few centuries of the growth of Buddhism, the Deer Park must have been a popular place of pilgrimage. But, it was in the time of Asoka that it acquired a special importance on account of his magnificent monuments, of which a pillar engraved with an edict and also a relic tower containing a portion of the corporeal remains of the Buddha have still survived. Sarnath maintained its celebrity under the successive rule of the Sungas, the Andhras and the Kushanas. In the golden age of the Guptas, Sarnath witnessed perhaps its best period in the field of art and sculpture. After the Guptas, the Hunas pillaged the place. But, the damages were soon repaired, and from the account of the Chinese pilgrim, Hiuen Tsang, we get a fine glimpse of the prosperity of the place and its numerous shrines and monasteries. In subsequent periods Sarnath continued to grow in size of opulence until it was finally overrun and sacked by Mahmud of Ghazni and Muhammad Ghori. The depredations of the Muslim invaders were so cataclysmic that after the twelfth century A.D. nearly the whole of Sarnath was buried under its own dirt and debris.

#### ANCIENT REMAINS OF SARNATH

Sarnath lay in oblivion until 1794 when the chance dismantlement of the Asokan stupa for bricks led to the discovery of its historical importance. The subsequent excavations of Colonel C. Mackenzie, Sir Alexander Cunningham, Major Kittoe, Mr. Oertel, Sir John Marshall, Dr. Konow and Messrs. Nicholls Hargreaves and Dayaram Sahni laid bare, among other things, the great monastic buildings, stupas, shrines and sculptures which had once adorned Sarnath. Practically all these ancient remains are

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connected with the Buddhist religion, and they cover a period of more than one thousand and five hundred years from the third century B. C. to the twelfth century A. D. A fine museum which was built in 1910 now houses the fine portable antiquities of this place.

The ancient remains of Sarnath are spread over a considerable area. As one arrives at the place, the first monument which catches the eye is a lofty brick mound, locally known as Chaukhandi. It is, in fact, a stupa which commemorates the place where the Buddha is said to have first met his five disciples. The octagonal tower which crowns the stupa was erected by Akbar in the sixteenth century to commemorate the visit of his father, Humayun, to this site. From the top of the tower one gets a wide and attractive view of the landscape around.

The next important landmark is the Dharmarajika stupa which was dismantled in 1794. It was originally built by Asoka to enshrine the relics of the Buddha. The structure, however, was successively rebuilt at different periods. The votive stupa perhaps marks the site where the Master preached his first sermon and turned the Wheel of Law. A little to the north stands the broken Asokan monolithic pillar, the famous Lion Capital of which is now preserved in the local Museum. Symbolical of the ideals of peace and goodwill, this Capital is now appropriately the emblem of Free India. To the east lie the ruins of a Gupta temple, called the Main Shrine. According to Hiuen Tsang, this temple was the Mulagandhakuti about 200 ft. high and surmounted by a golden fruit. Its southern chapel, when excavated, laid bare a beautifully chiselled and polished monolithic railing of the Asokan age.

#### DHAMEKH STUPA

Around the Main Shrine are to be seen the areas where numerous monasteries and stupas have been brought to light. The monasteries (Sangharamas) which are of all sizes are of the same basic pattern, the residential cells being placed on the four sides of an open quadrangular court. Many of them were rebuilt again and again, and the earlier structures have now been unearthed under the subsequent

errections. The monastery built by Kumaradevi, the Buddhist queen of Kanauj, in the twelfth century A. D. is the latest and most splendid among the local monastic establishments.

Among the monuments of Sarnath the most spectacular one is undoubtedly the solid and lofty cylindrical tower which is the famous Dhamekh stupa. Although in a poor state of preservation, it is still 143 ft. high from its foundations. Its modern name is a corruption of the Sanskrit word, Dharmeksha, meaning "the beholding of Law". It stands for the first sermon which the Buddha preached here. The stupa has eight projecting faces with niches for images. These faces were originally decorated with carved ornaments of floral and geometrical patterns. The entire carving which is extraordinarily striking and superbly artistic indicates the rhythmic trend of the artist's conception. The workmanship here may be assigned to the Gupta Age.

The Mulagandhakuti Vihar, built in recent years by the Mahabodhi Society to enshrine the Buddhist relics from Taxila, is a fine modern structure reminiscent of the old Buddhist styles of art. On its walls can be seen remarkable fresco paintings, depicting events from the life of the Buddha. The anniversary of the Vihara, occurring on the full moon day of November, is the occasion when Buddhists from all parts of the world congregate here.

#### SRAVASTI

Sravasti, the capital of the ancient kingdom of Uttara Kosala, is another centre in Uttar Pradesh which is intimately connected with the life of the Buddha. This site has been identified with the remains at Saheth-Maheth on the bank of the river Rapti in the vicinity of the Gonda and Bahraich districts. One can reach the place from Balrampur, a station on the North-Eastern Railway, which is at a distance of only twelve miles. Saheth-Maheth actually stands for two different sites. Maheth is the larger site which has an area of 400 acres. It represents the city proper. Saheth, on the other hand, covers an area of 32 acres, and lies two furlongs to the south-west. This has been identified with the site of the famous Jetavana monastery which flourished here in the time of the Buddha.

### *Buddhist Sites*

The ancient city of Sravasti was founded by Sravasta, a ruler of the Solar race. Prasenajit was the King of Uttara Kosala, and Sravasti was his capital when the Buddha came here. Here the Buddha delivered many discourses and performed the most surprising miracle to convince the heretic Tirthika teachers. The Buddhist texts refer to this miracle as consisting of a series of strange happenings of which the simultaneous rise of the sun and the moon in the sky, the alternate flow of fire and water from the Master's body, and the sudden appearance of his numerous effigies are the most important ones. This miracle has been a popular theme in Buddhist art from the ancient times.

Sravasti was a populous and busy city in the days of the Buddha. The great merchant, Anathapindika, and the noble lady, Visakha Migaramata, who are well-known in the Buddhist annals, became the Master's staunch disciples here. Anathapindika bought the garden of Prince Jeta at a fancy price in gold, and built a grand monastery for the sake of the Buddha who was pleased to reside here for some time. The Buddha came here several times, and delivered some of his chief discourses at this monastery. While he stayed here, numerous monks came from different places to discuss difficult and knotty points of the Buddhist doctrine. As a result of the Buddha's close association with the city, innumerable shrines, stupas and monasteries gradually grew up here and these were for centuries frequented by the Buddhist pilgrims from all corners of the country.

#### A PROSPEROUS CITY

Sravasti was not only a flourishing pilgrim city, but was a wealthy commercial centre in the ancient times. Merchants from all parts of India used to flock here for purposes of trade, for the city was situated alongside of the main highway of trade from North India to Mithila, Rajgir Subarnabhumi in the east. Many of these merchants became devoted disciples of the Buddha, and patronized Buddhist sculpture and architecture.

The remains at Sravasti have been explored and excavated in recent years. The correct identification of the site has been corroborated by the discovery of important

inscriptions bearing unmistakable references to the famous Jetavana monastery at Sravasti. The excavations on the more extensive site of Maheth have brought to light the relics of the huge gateways of the town and also the remains of many other edifices, which bear testimony to the prosperity of Sravasti in ancient days. The ruins which have been unearthed cover a period ranging from the Mauryan times down to the twelfth century A. D. when Buddhism ceased to be an important religion in India. Among the ancient stupas found here, one dates from the third century B. C. It was perhaps meant to enshrine the bone relics of the Buddha. A huge and attractive statue of the Master was obtained from this site. It is now kept in the Indian Museum, Calcutta.

The excavations have also confirmed the fact that Sravasti must have been a big city even in later ancient and early medieval times. The last great patron of the local monastic establishments was Kumaradevi, queen of Govindachandra, the Gahadavala king of Kanauj, who offered some land for the upkeep of the Jetavana monastery in the year A.D. 1128-29. The rise of the Sultanate in North India finally marked the extinction of Buddhism and the ruin of Sravasti.

Today, Sravasti has once again begun to grow in importance as a place considered sacred by the Buddhists who frequent here in large numbers.

#### SANKASYA

Sankasya which has been definitely identified with modern Saikisa of Sanisa in the district of Etah is another holy Buddhist site associated with the life of the Master. One can reach this place from Farrukhabad, a station on the Northern Railway. The discovery at the site of an elephant capital which must have crowned an Asokan pillar has helped in the correct identification of the place.

The historic sanctity of Sankasya lies in the fact that here the Buddha performed another celebrated miracle to confound his critics. The miracle at Sankasya came after the Great Miracle which had occurred at Sravasti. The story of this miracle is indeed extraordinary. Tradition holds

that the Buddha who had gone to the Heaven of the Thirty-three gods after performing his greatest miracle at Sravasti came down upon the earth at this place. The account of this supernatural event is reverentially described in sacred literature. It shows that the Buddha descended to the earth with the help of a triple ladder in the company of the gods, Brahma and Sakra. This has been a popular theme in Buddhist art and sculpture. After this miracle, Sankasya rose to be a hallowed place for the Buddhist devotees, and it was soon adorned with stupas, shrines and monastic establishments.

The Chinese travellers, Fa-hien and Hiuen Tsang, came to this place, and they have left us some details of the great monuments which they saw here. But, their accounts are not much detailed, and so it is not possible to form an idea of the greatness of the town. At present, unfortunately, the place is in a dilapidated and crumbling state, and the ruins cannot be correctly identified. There is a village over a mound which the local people regard as an old fort. It is 41 ft. high and covers an area of 1,500 ft. by 1,000 ft. Not far from this mound, there is another mound, formed of solid brickwork. A shrine dedicated to the goddess Bisari Devi is situated on the mound. Many other mounds of a similar nature are dotted over the neighbourhood. The ruins of an earthen rampart of over three miles in circumference have also been found at the site. The trial diggings hitherto undertaken have not yielded much information, and so systematic excavations are needed to establish its detailed history.

#### KUSINAGAR

Kusinagar or Kusinara was the town of the ancient Mallas. It is now included in the district of Deoria and is identified with Kasia. It is a sacred spot of the greatest importance for the Buddhists, for it is the place where the Buddha attained Mahaparinirvana (passing away from the world) in his eightieth year. The followers and admirers of the Master invariably visit this place for pilgrimage. It lies at some distance from the line of railway communication, and one can reach it by a fine motorable

road from Deoria, which is a station on the North-Eastern Railway, twenty-one miles away.

The story of the Buddha's demise is picturesquely related in sacred literature. He had a serious attack of dysentery after he had taken his last meal at the residence of Cunda, a blacksmith. While he was ill, he reached the famous Sal forest near Kusinagar from Pava. Here he realized that his death was near at hand. So, he sent a message to the Mallas. They at once hurried to him, and paid their last homage to the Master.

Like other spots of sanctified memory, Kusinagar too grew up into a great place of pilgrimage. In course of time, numerous shrines and monasteries were erected here to commemorate the Buddha's passing away. But, it is not known why the place sank into oblivion rather early. It was perhaps entirely abandoned for unknown reasons. It may be that there was some natural calamity like an earthquake. In any case, when Fa-hien and Hiuen Tsang came to this place, they both found it deserted and in a state of ruin and desolation.

Recent excavations have not brought to light much that is historically valuable, but a number of inscriptions which refer to the Parinirvana Chaitya have been found which definitely serve to confirm the correct identification of this site. It is, however, a pity that the Asokan stupa which is supposed to have been erected here has not yet been found. It may perhaps have been dismantled and pillaged. It is also not unlikely that it may be lying buried below the Parinirvana Chaitya. This Chaitya dates from the Gupta age, according to the inscriptions discovered here.

There are several sacred structures at Kasia. Of these, one which is specially significant is the Matha Kunwar Ka Kot. It houses a huge supine statue of the Buddha in the unconditioned state of Parinirvana. Originally, this statue was found in a broken condition, and its different fragments lay scattered. A distinguished expert, Mr. Carlleyle, cleverly re-joined the pieces and restored the original shape in an artistic style. There is a lofty mound in the vicinity, which the local residents call Ramabhar.

*Buddhist Sites*

This mound has not yet been fully excavated, but it is presumed that it marks the place where the ancient stupa containing the remains of the Buddha's body was erected. Tradition holds that these sacred relics were partitioned into eight equal parts. If the mound is properly excavated, it may reveal valuable data with the help of which the history of this place can be correctly reconstructed.

## TEMPLES

The land of Uttar Pradesh has hallowed associations for the Hindus, for it has been the prime stronghold of Hindu culture and religion. From those far-off days when the Aryans made it their home, it has been the most sacrosanct of regions in India. With its ground redeemed in some mythical past by Vishnu, Siva and Durga, Uttar Pradesh is justly regarded as the threshold of the god. It is not the native land of Rama and Krishna, whose earthly lives are still a source of divine inspiration? Have not the sacred waters of the Ganga and the Yamuna sanctified the soil, and mirrored in their own bosoms holy temples which have been places of worship for countless ages? Uttar Pradesh is *par excellence* the abode of temples.

### VARANASI TEMPLES

Varanasi, the Vatican of the Hindus, is reputed to be the centre and the earliest created spot of the earth. As such, it is the holiest and the most ancient cradle of Indian civilization. There are other sacred places in India venerated for religious association, but none of them would appeal with a stronger attraction than Varanasi to the many millions of devotees who worship at its shrines. Rising on the banks of the Holy Ganga, Varanasi is a city of temples of which, it is said, there are at least 2,000.

Among the numerous temples in the city perhaps none is so well-known as the temple of Vishwanath, the patron deity of Varanasi. It transcends all other temples in the city in holiness. The earliest temple of Vishwanath was destroyed by Muhammad Ghori. The second one, rebuilt on the same site, was later pulled down by Aurangzeb. The present temple was built by Ahalya Bai in the eighteenth century. It is both historically and architecturally interesting. Two of the domes are covered with plates of copper, overlaid with gold. These were presented by Ranjit Singh, the Sikh ruler.

### *Temples*

Another temple which is much revered and visited by devotees is that of Annapurna, the goddess of Plenty. The temple is said to be two hundred years old and is decorated with beautifully tinted sculptures. Even though it is situated in a narrow, winding lane, the temple is well worth a visit, for structurally it is both lively and pretty.

The temple dedicated to Durga, the Mother of the Universe, though not very old, is a hallowed building and is architecturally splendid. The best traditions of the old building craft are to be seen and admired here. Its exquisite porch added in 1865 is remarkably beautiful, and might be easily mistaken for a superb specimen of ancient temple architecture. Its sculptured pillars, curvilinear spires and ornamental dome are of graceful proportions.

Among other temples mention must be made of the elegant Nepalese Temple on the bank of the Ganga. Many consider it to be the most interesting and stylish temple in the whole city. With its multiple storeys and slanting roofs, this temple appears to be an eloquent contrast to all other shrines in Varanasi.

### ALLAHABAD TEMPLES

Allahabad, standing on the famous site of ancient Prayag, is well-known for the sacred confluence of three rivers—Ganga, Yamuna and the invisible Saraswati. The place dates from a period remote from historical record. Its importance in Hindu history is so great that it is looked upon in epics and legendary accounts as the *Tirtharaj* or King of places of pilgrimage, a title which is proudly acknowledged to the present day. As the place where Brahma performed the horse sacrifice in token of his universal overlordship, and as one which was blessed by Rama and Sita, Allahabad is immortalized with the impress of hoary antiquity. Its annual bathing festival in the month of Magha and the twelve-yearly Kumbha Mela when innumerable pilgrims flock to have a dip in the confluence have still kept alive the religious associations of this holy of holies.

Of the sacred relics of old Prayag, practically nothing

has survived. Its temples were all razed to the ground by conquerors like Muhammad Ghori. The renowned temple of Patalpuri inside the Fort of Akbar is, however, the only known ancient site. Historians regard it as the oldest shrine in Uttar Pradesh. Hiuen Tsang who saw it in the seventh century describes it as a very large structure. He saw a great tree in front of it, from the branches of which devotees used to jump off and commit suicide. The temple now lies underground, because of the erection of the fort, which made it necessary to raise the interior level of the citadel. The temple is of a peculiar shape, and its oblong hall is a curious feature. An old stump still commemorates the ancient Akshayvata.

Among other numerous temples of Allahabad, none is of any particular architectural interest, and all are modern and conventional. The shrine of Madhoji at Daraganj and that of Bharadwaj at Colonclganj are two very old and hallowed sites.

#### AYODHYA TEMPLES

Ayodhya, situated on the banks of the Sarayu, is pre-eminently a city of holy shrines, Hindu and Jaina. It is a place of great antiquity, and belongs to the epic age. It was the capital town of the ancient kingdom of Kosala, ruled by the Solar race of kings. There is no Hindu who does not know and love Ayodhya, the city of Rama and Sita, and the scene of the celebrated Ramayana. After the death of the last of Rama's line, Ayodhya a huge city covering an area of ninety-six square miles, became gradually a wilderness and sank into oblivion. Hiuen Tsang saw only twenty Hindu temples and twenty Buddhist monasteries.

At the time of Muslim conquest, there were three magnificent temples here. The temple at Janmasthan marked the site where Rama was born. This was converted into a mosque by Babur. Another shrine, the Swargadwar Mandir, which perhaps marked the place of Rama's cremation, and the temple called Treta-ka-Thakur where Rama had performed a great sacrifice were destroyed in the time of Aurangzeb.

### *Temples*

At present, there are numerous temples of Rama, Sita and Hanumana. The most important place of worship is the famous mound of Ramkot. The ancient relics are no longer to be seen, but there are several temples of which the most sacred is the Hanumanagarhi, a huge structure in the shape of a four-sided fort. Among other holy spots in the city are the Kanak Bhavan which is an impressive modern temple. The shrine of Nageshwar Nath and the Maniparvat are equally celebrated. On the occasions of the Rama Navami, the Jhula and the Kartiki Purnima, large fairs are held here, which are attended by countless devotees.

### MATHURA TEMPLES

Mathura on the west bank of the Yamuna is one of the oldest towns in India. It is mentioned by ancient Greek writers, for it was ruled by Indo-Greek Satraps. It was renowned in the days of the Kushanas, the Guptas and the Hunas. Being the legendary birthplace of Krishna who is famed in Hindu mythology, it has acquired a peculiar sanctity in the eyes of Hindus. But, its ancient temples were all pulled down by Mahmud of Ghazni in A. D. 1018. The great mosque of Aurangzeb marks the site of the old Keshavadas temple destroyed in 1669. The present shrines are thus either late medieval or early modern.

Mathura is a great pilgrim centre, and even its modern temples are architecturally notable. The temple of Kedareshwar is the loftiest and the most popular among the temples in the city. The temple of Dwarkadhisth, Madan Mohan, Kalbhairava and Kubja-Mandir are the best among other shrines.

Vrindaban, about five miles to the north of Mathura, and situated on the banks of the Yamuna, is an extremely holy place. It is dotted with innumerable temples, of which at least one thousand are regularly visited. Many of them are masterpieces of art. The city famous as the scene of Krishna's early adventures is very important in Hindu history and dates back to a very remote antiquity.

The temple of Govind Deva, built by Maharaja

Man Singh of Amber in 1590, is undoubtedly the finest temple in all North India, and is justly regarded as an architectural wonder. The temple has suffered much from vandalism, and much of its super-structure has been destroyed. But even as it is, it excites the admiration of all lovers of architecture. Its plan which is cruciform reminds one of the Sas Bahu temple at Gwalior. The total absence of figure sculpture in the ornamentation and concentration on pillars, brackets and lintels form a wonderful feature. The introduction of the radiating arch, built in Hindu style, shows the influence of the Muslim builder on Hindu craft traditions. As a work of art, this temple is far superior to Akbar's great mosque at Sikri, which was erected about the same time. There is no doubt that, before its desecration, it must have been one of the grandest monuments in India.

Among other important temples which date from the Mughal period are the temples of Madan Mohan, Jugal Kishore and Gopi Nath. Indian building traditions are seen at their best in these handsome shrines. The craftsmanship is irreproachable, for each building possesses a strong individuality.

The modern temples of Vrindaban are no less striking than the earlier ones. The splendid shrine of Ranganath, built in 1851 by two rich merchants, Govind Das and Radha Krishna, at a cost of forty-five lakhs of rupees, is the biggest modern temple in India. It measures 773 ft. in length and 440 ft. in breadth and is remarkable for the commingling of the South Indian and North Indian styles of architecture. The temples of Lala Babu, Radha Indrakishore, Radha Gopal and Lachmi Narayan are excellent examples of local art which secures to perfection both grace and ingenuity. Gokul, Gobardhan and Mahaban, which are situated in the neighbourhood of Vrindaban and Mathura, are resorted to by many thousands of pilgrims every year. Its quaint temples are well-known in the history and traditions of Vaishnavism.

#### VINDHYACHALA TEMPLES

Vindhyaachala which is famous in the Puranas is a

### *Temples*

popular place of pilgrimage. It is the next station to Mirzapur from which it is only at a distance of seven miles. It is situated on an isolated hill on the right bank of the Ganga. The Vindhya range begins from this place and the panoramic view from the top of the hill is picturesque. No pilgrim on his way to Allahabad or Varanasi fails to visit this place owing to its special sanctity. It is said that the town once possessed 150 temples, but all these were destroyed by Aurangzeb.

The celebrated temple of the goddess Vindhya vasini is at present the chief attraction of Vindhya chala. The temple is visited by many thousands of devotees every year. The temple is a stone structure, and is of rectangular shape. It is surrounded by a wide verandah. The top is flat, and the pillars are plain. The head of the image is of black stone, and it has big eyes, the whites of which are made of plates of shining silver. The whole edifice appears to be very old, though it is not possible to ascertain its date. Tradition says that the goddess was specially worshipped by the Thugs.

The temple of the eight-armed Yogamaya, which marks the site where Sati's left foot is believed to have fallen, is at a short distance from the main shrine of Vindhya vasini. The Kali-Khon temple which is only a mile and a half from the town, stands on one side of the hill, and is supposed to be an old place of worship.

### BITHUR AND NIMSAR

Bithur which lies at a distance of fourteen miles from Kanpur is a place of the greatest antiquity. It has a special sanctity for the Hindus, for it was here that Brahma had performed a horse sacrifice in the mythical past in order to celebrate the fulfilment of the work of creation. In the epic age, Bithur became well-known as the hermitage of Valmiki, the immortal author of the Ramayana.

It was in Bithur, so the legend runs, that Sita when she was exiled by Rama came to seek shelter at Valmiki's Ashrama. Her twin sons, Lava and Kusha, were born and brought up here. Numerous temples arose at this place in

token of its sacred associations. When Baji Rao II was interred here, the place was invested with a special importance. Some of the local temples are fairly old and handsome.

#### NAIMISHARANYA TEMPLES

Nimsar or Naimisharanya, situated on the banks of the Gomti in the district of Sitapur, is one of the most ancient sites in India. Its antiquity goes back to the early days of Aryan colonization when the ancient Rishis congregated in its sylvan retreats and composed the texts of the Puranas. Tradition asserts that Nimsar was the abode of 60,000 sages. If this is true, the place must have been specially important as the fountain-head of Aryan culture.

As a place of pilgrimage, Nimsar is held in high esteem. Thousands of pilgrims annually come here to pay their respects to the local deities. Nimsar is one of the fifty-one "Pitasthanas", and so the temple of the local goddess is an object of worship. There are, however, numerous tanks and temples at this place, many of which claim remote antiquity. In addition to the monthly "Amavas" *mela*, a big festival is held at this place on every "Somavati Amavas", i.e. when the new moon falls on a Monday.

Garhmuktesar is a sacred spot in the district of Meerut, lying on the right bank of the Ganga. Tradition holds that it was a hallowed place in the legendary times when many Rishis performed austerities on the banks of the Ganga at this place. The association of the Ganga has made this place specially holy and popular. A big *mela* is held here annually at the end of the month of Kartik, and it is visited by a large number of pilgrims. Of the holy shrines at this place, special mention must be made of the famous Ganga temple which is venerated by every Hindu.

#### HARDWAR TEMPLES

Hardwar is a holy place of great antiquity. It is situated on the southern base of the Himalayas at the mouth of the gorge through which the Ganga descends upon the plains.

## *Temples*

It attracts millions of pilgrims during the Kumbha *mela* which is held every twelfth year. Intimately connected with the worship of both the gods Vishnu and Siva, Hardwar is full of temples held sacred by the Vaishnavas and the Saivas.

Of the numerous shrines here, the oldest is the temple of the goddess Mayadevi, which is believed to have been built in the tenth century A. D. It is built of stone, and looks impressive. Inside the temple, there is the remarkable image of the goddess which has four arms and three heads, holding a Chakra in one hand, the head of a person in the second, and a Trisul in the third. Obviously, the goddess is Siva's consort.

The Gangadwar temple is another great object of veneration. It marks the site of the legendary sacrifice of Daksha immortalized in the Puranas. The temple of Daksheshwar at Kankhal is another sacred memorial to the aforesaid sacrifice. The Chandi Pahar temple which crowns the hill of the same name is also a sacred resort which is an object of great attraction. The modern temple of Sarvanath is a pretty monument which overlooks an old image of the Buddha sitting under the Bodhi tree.

Rishikesh which lies fifteen miles beyond Hardwar is picturesquely located on the Ganga on a cliff overhanging on the river. It is a holy city of the Vaishnavas, and is considered to be the abode of Narayana. It is a beauty spot and the mountain scenery of this place is so enchanting that it is justly regarded as the home of the gods. There are many temples here, but the most popular one is that of Bharat, named after the younger brother of Rama and Lakshman. The Satyanarayana temple is another important shrine.

## KEDARNATH TEMPLE

Kedarnath is believed to be among the holiest temples in India. Silhouetted against the background of a grim and majestic landscape in the region of the snow-clad Himalayas, the temple has an appeal which cannot be described in words. The way-worn pilgrim forgets all the fatigues of an arduous hill journey as soon as Sri Kedarnath rises before the eye in

## *The Glories of Utter Pradesh*

all its beauty and glory. He feels as if he has seen the fulfilment of his earthly existence and reached the gateway to immortality.

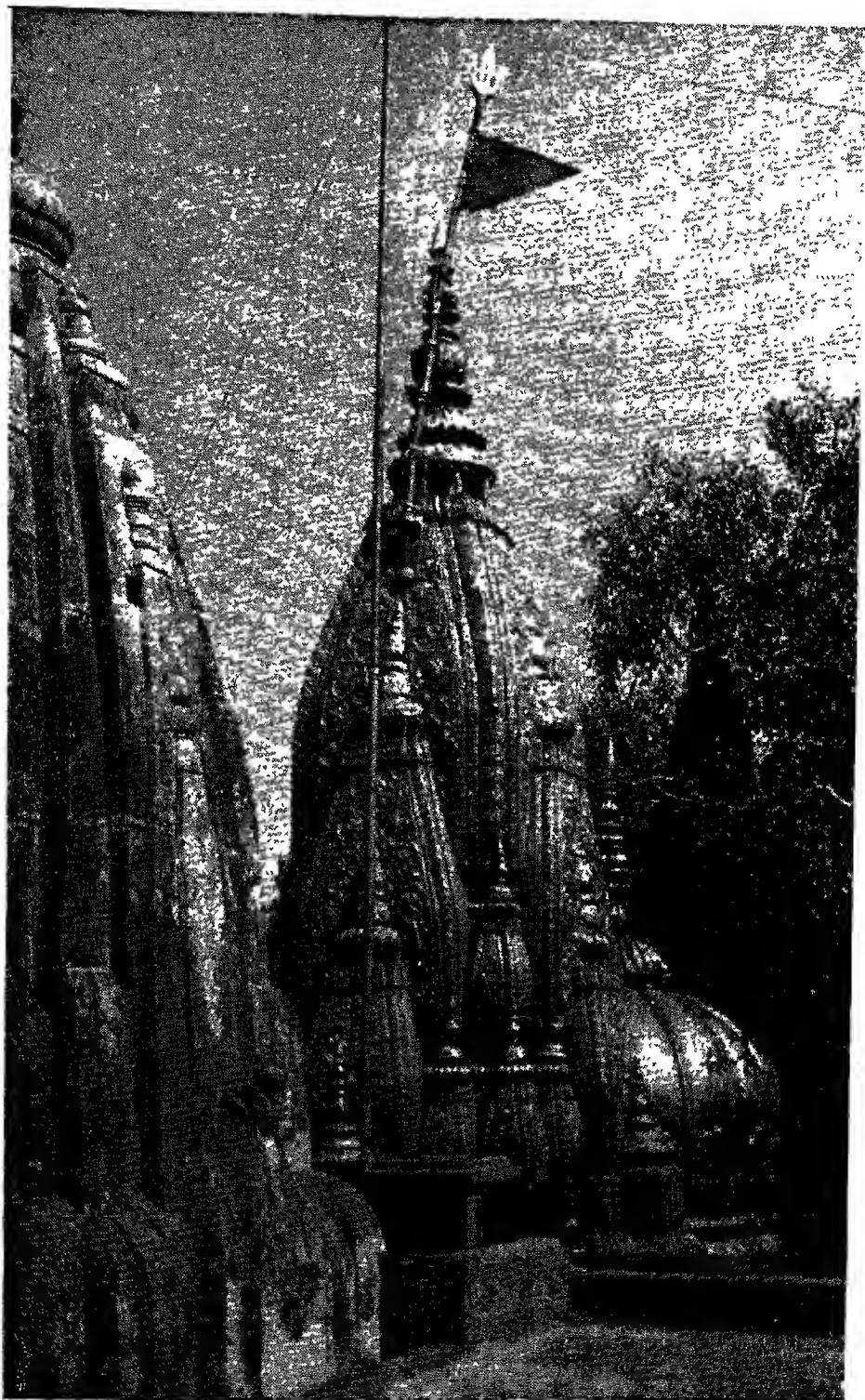
Overlooked on all sides by dizzy and snowy mountains, the temple of Kedarnath stands in the valley of the Mandakini at a height of 11,753 ft. from the sea-level on a ridge underneath the peak of Mahapantha. Though lacking in decorative ornament, the temple is both stately and virile. It is truly suggestive of the austere and sublime grandeur of the god Siva whom it commemorates. It is not known when exactly the present temple was erected, but the site itself has a hoary past, for the Pandavas are said to have first constructed here a temple in honour of Sadasiva, the invisible form of Siva, when they were on their way to heaven.

The temple of Kedarnath opens usually by the end of April and closes at the end of October on the Baliraj day, following the Diwali. Six months after this, the temple lies buried under snow. As the region of Kedarnath is intensely cold and its air rarefied, most of the pilgrims prefer to stay at Kedarnath during the daytime and go back before nightfall to Rambara at a distance of four miles, to avoid the severe cold at night.

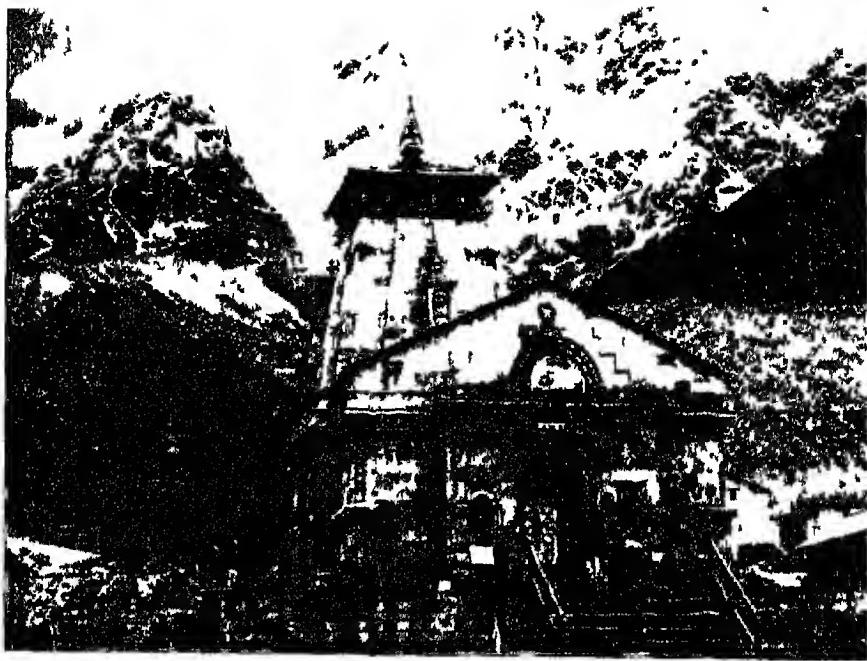
### BADRINATH TEMPLE

Badrinath is the supreme place of pilgrimage in Uttrakhand. It attracts every year thousands of pilgrims. It is the one spot where every pious Hindu aspires to come at least once in his lifetime. (This temple, like Kedarnath, remains covered with snow from November to April, and so the route is open only from May to October.)

The shrine of Badrinath, nestling in the valley of the Alakananda and surrounded by snowy peaks, is situated at a height of 10,300 ft. above sea-level. It is dedicated to the god Badrinath who appeared here for meditation. The ancient temple, mentioned in the Puranas, which must have been built in the epic age was destroyed 12,000 years ago either by avalanches or by Buddhists. It was then that Sankaracharya visited the place and rebuilt the temple under



*Vishwanath temple, Varanasi*

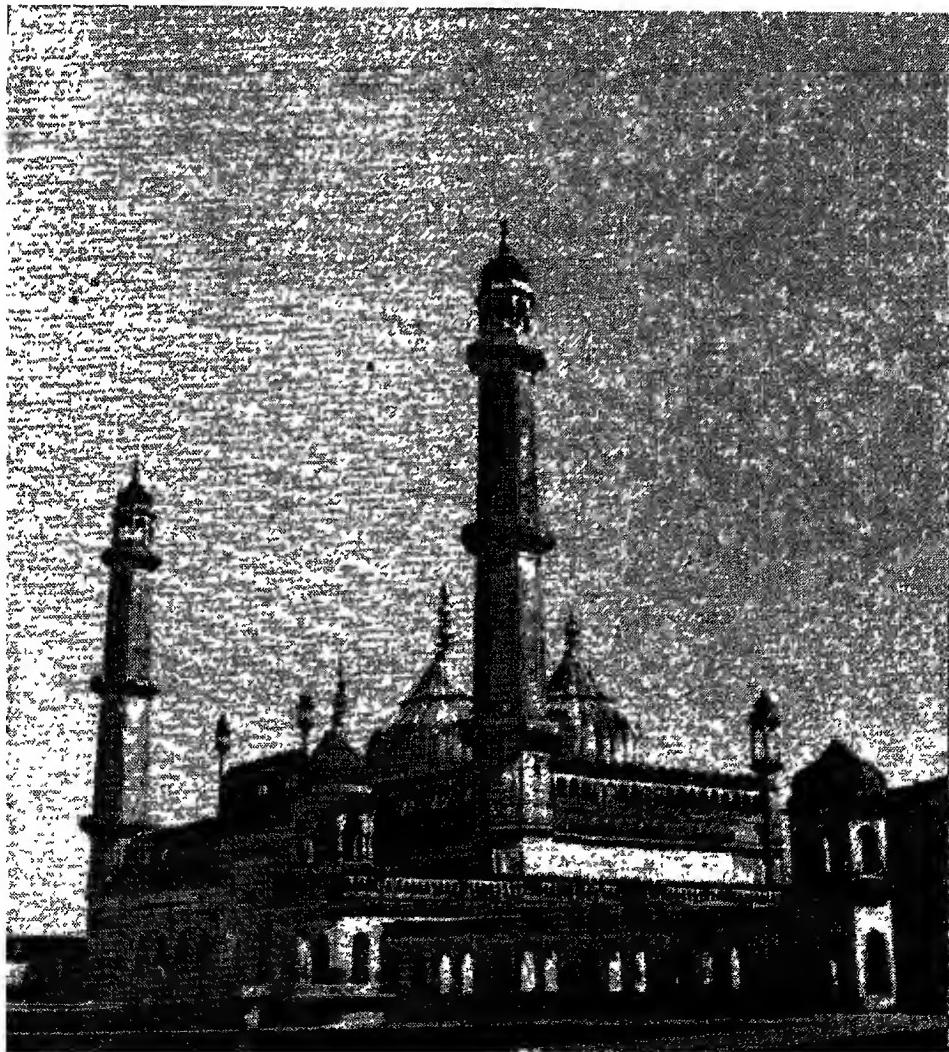


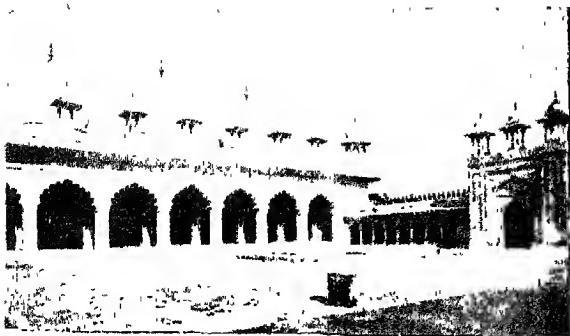
*Kedarnath temple*

*Govindji Temple, Vrindavan*

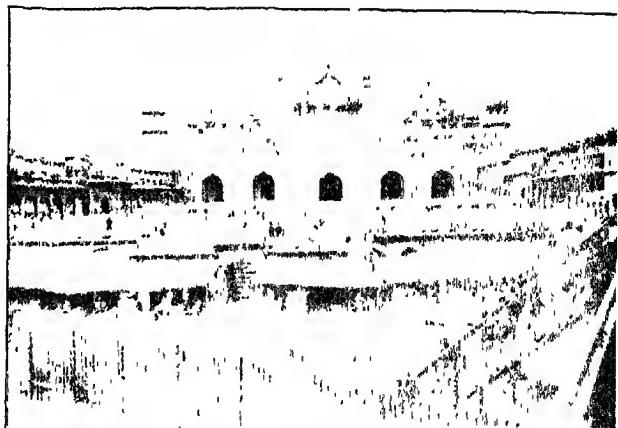


*Asafi Mosque, Lucknow*



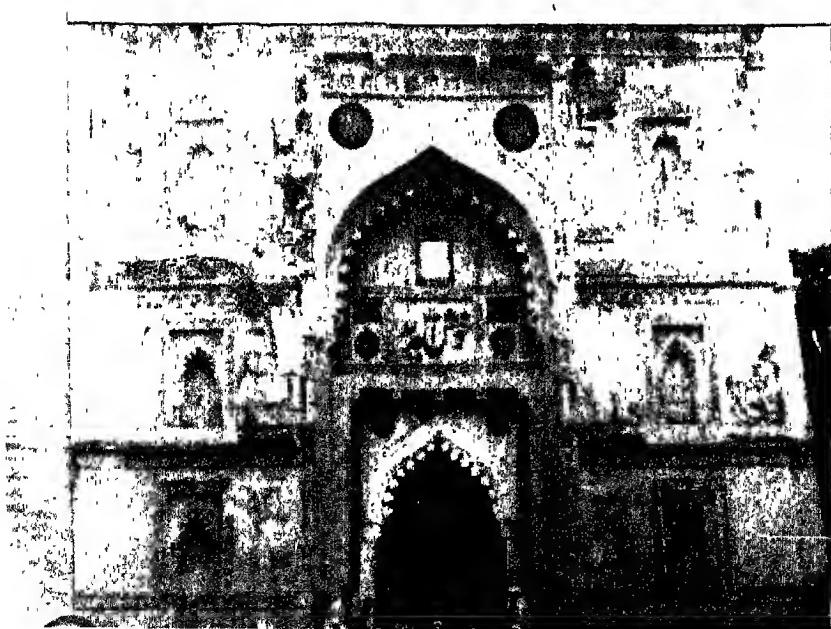


*Moti Masjid, Agra Fort*



*Jami Masjid, Agra*

*Atala Mosque, Jaunpur*



### *Temples*

divine inspiration. The present temple thus dates from the eighth century A. D. It is an elegant structure, standing picturesquely on the bank of the Alaknanda river. It is nearly 50 ft. high, and looks like a cone, with a diminutive cupola, crowned by a spire. The gold canopy is said to have been presented by Ahalya Bai. In the compound of the temple there is the sacred Tapta-Kunda, a reservoir fed by a sulphur spring with a temperature of 130°.

The image of Badrinarayan does not resemble that of Vishnu. It looks like a Yogi sitting in the Lotus pose. It is also strange that it seems to have four hands. As it is known that Uttarakhand was once a centre of Buddhism, the image may have originally been that of the Buddha. Thanks to the heroism and tireless efforts of Sankaracharya, the place was rescued from obscurity and brought back to the fold of Hinduism. After sometime the temple again fell a victim to vandalism and it lay unknown until another great religious teacher, Ramanuja, came and restored the worship of the image. The temple is said to have been entirely rebuilt in the sixteenth century A. D. by the ruler of Garhwal or Nepal.

The temple is run by attendants who hail from different corners. The chief priest, known as the Rawal, has to be a Nambudiri Brahman from Malabar. The subordinate priests are Brahmans from Devaprayag. Garhwalis of certain specified villages are expected to bring fuel for the pilgrims. When it begins to snow in winter, the Bhotiyas of Mana cover the shrine in blankets which they have to pay for.

### **JOURNEY TO BADRINATH**

Formerly, journey to Kedarnath and Badrinath was extremely difficult and even dreadful, for there were no roads, bridges or bridlepaths in the recesses of the Himalayan heights. Things have now completely changed with construction of motor roads and introduction of wheeled traffic over the major portions of the pilgrim routes. Road construction is being pushed on so rapidly that in the near future Badrinath and Kedarnath will be within comfortable reach of the resident of the plains. Porters and mules are

easily available to carry baggage. Ponies and Dandies can be easily hired by such as are unwilling to trudge. Every two or three miles along the route there are rest-houses for use at night. A large number of *dharamsalas* where all possible facilities are provided to travellers and Sadhus are maintained by the authorities of the Kali Kamli Wala Kshetra and the Punjab-Sindh Kshetra. The Government maintains furnished Inspection Houses at convenient places. Shops where grocery and provisions can be had have sprung up at all these places. It may also be stated here that Kedarnath is about 157 miles from Hardwar, and Badrinath about 191 miles. The distance between Badrinath and Kedarnath is only 26 miles as the crow flies, but the pilgrim route makes a long detour of 101 miles.

Uttarakhand has acquired a peculiar sanctity perhaps because it is the most attractive country in all-India. No other mountainous region can excel it, hill and dale, rock and snow, river and lake, birds and animals, flowers and ferns, all contributing to fund of joy unequalled anywhere else. Truly is it deemed the residence of the blessed, supernal and unearthly. Fabled in the holy annals of the Aryans, this land was the sanctuary of the Vedas, Puranas and systems of philosophy. So, the spiritual magnetism is more powerful here than in any other sacred land. Man-made temple is nothing as compared to the shrine of Nature which beckons the pilgrims to this beatific "Devabhumi". The eternal India of faith has survived in this Land of gods despite the encroaching tide of modernism and unbelief.

## HISTORIC MOSQUES

Forming as it did a veritable focus of Islamic style of architecture in India, the Uttar Pradesh region was a celebrated home of the mosque. The mosque or "Masjid" which literally means "place of prostration" constituted the essential building of the Islamic faith, and so in almost every town there was a mosque. While there could be more than one mosque, the largest in the town was called the "Jame" Masjid or the "Collecting Mosque".

The historic mosques of Uttar Pradesh may be resolved into two prominent classes—the provincial and the imperial. The first of these classes is to be found in places like Jaunpur which was the centre of the Sharqi dynasty. The imperial mosques are located in the imperial headquarters of the Mughal Empire—Agra and Sikri. The difference in style between these two classes is to be noted. The provincial type was simpler, more rigid and less extravagant. The imperial type was grand and expensive. For the provincial mosques the material was ordinary, and it was mostly obtained from local temples. The Mughal Emperors, however, built in stone or marble, and their mosques were symbols of power and magnificence.

### JAUNPUR MOSQUES

Jaunpur provides the best specimens of the provincial type. The history of Jaunpur covers roughly the second half of the fourteenth and the first half of the fifteenth centuries. But, it was in the fifteenth century that the mosque style at Jaunpur was evolved, when the local rulers had assumed independence of Delhi.

The most historic mosque of Jaunpur was the Atala Masjid, which Ibrahim Sharqi built in 1408 on the foundations dug by Firuz Tughluq about thirty years before. In the grace and vigour of its style, this mosque provided the

model for all the mosques of Jaunpur. The Atala Masjid is so named because it was erected on the site of the Hindu temple of Atala Devi. The courtyard of the mosque measures 177 ft. in diameter. On three sides there are the pillared cloisters, and to the west side there is the sanctuary. The cloisters are fairly extensive, and they are five aisles deep. The whole mosque encloses a square of 258 ft. side. In the centre of each side there is a pretty gateway, the two on the north and south are specially decorated with domes. In the middle of the western side rises a tall and striking propylon which has sloping sides 75 ft. high and 55 ft. wide at the base. Inside the propylon is a fine arched recess 11 ft. deep. This propylon is the most distinctive feature of the Jaunpur style of mosque.

The Atala Masjid is a superb example of the synthesis of Hindu and Muslim art. Hindu artisans were employed, and Hindu materials were used but still Muslim features were evolved in a manner which indicated a distinctly original idea. The mosque shows how the local builder, freed from the bondage of the old order, could impart an appearance of freshness and originality to the final composition.

The biggest and most ambitious mosque of Jaunpur is the Jame Masjid. It was built about 1470 by Husain Shah who was the last Sharqi ruler of Jaunpur. Many of the chief points of Atala Masjid are repeated here. But, there are differences too in this mosque. Its dignity is increased by its elevated base reached by an imposing flight of steps. The courtyard is a square, the cloisters are two-storeyed. The central propylon dominates the western side, and is 5 ft. high and 77 ft. wide at its base. One is filled with admiration at the dignified and graceful manner in which the whole structure is conceived.

Among other historic mosques of Jaunpur may be mentioned the Khalis Mukhlis Masjid and the Jhanjri Masjid both built about 1480. The first one is sternly simple, while the second is rich and decorated, although much of it is in ruins. Built about 1450, the Lal Darwaza mosque was planned and erected by a woman, Bibi Raja, the queen of Mahmud Shah. It was in reality a private chapel of the palace, which was reached by an elegant gate coloured with

## *Historic Mosques*

vermilion, hence its designation. The architect of the mosque was a Hindu, Kamau, the son of Visadru. Its courtyard is 132 ft. square. On the whole, the mosque is both pretty and elegant.

### FEATURES OF JAUNPUR MOSQUES

Certain features of Jaunpur mosques are well worth a study. Nowhere has a greater consideration for the gentler sex been shown than in Jaunpur mosques. Beautiful galleries were provided for the accommodation of women and the fine screens which enclosed the galleries show a taste of a high order. The religious needs of women were specially attended to in a manner which was not seen even at Agra and Sikri. Bibi Raja who figured prominently in Jaunpur history made the screened *zenana* apartment particularly attractive. Then, the combination is incongruous, yet it is pleasing. The dome is rather obscured by the pylon, yet seen from the side it is peculiarly interesting. Again, the transept halls form an interesting study. Those in Jame Masjid are unencumbered by pillars or support of any kind—an arrangement which is rarely seen elsewhere. Besides, the arches are peculiar. They are of the "Tudor" variety, but their curves and contours waver weakly. It is also worth noticing that the arch and the beam and bracket are combined in an illogical manner in the Jaunpur mosques. The combination shows Hindu influences in any case. The sloping sides of the pylons remind one of the Tughluq style of Delhi. Lastly, the tapering turrets and the arcaded side-aisles are a memorable feature of the Jaunpur style.

The artistry of the Jaunpur mosque reflects much refinement in its technique, and so the buildings are both strong and pretty. Their appearance is so ingenuous that it cannot fail to impress, while their character is vigorous, purposeful and honest. The Jaunpur style has its defects and illogicalities, yet its features have a strength of their own. The style on the whole marks an interesting phase of Indo-Islamic architecture.

### JAME MASJID AT SIKRI

The Jame Masjid of Akbar at Fatehpur-Sikri is counted

among the finest mosques in the East, and is the largest mosque of its type in Uttar Pradesh. It is one of the grandest of all Akbar's monuments ; the historic associations connected with it make it the most significant among them.

The mosque is supposed to be copied from the great mosque of Mecca, but this belief is not justified, for although the basic style of the building is Muslim, many of its features such as the pillars are Hindu in style. The tradition probably arose from the belief that this mosque built in honour of the saint, Salim Chishti, merits respect like the Masjid-e-Haram of Mecca. This mosque was built by Akbar to commemorate the birth of his heir-apparent. According to Badauni, the mosque took five years to build. Jahangir states in his *Memoirs* that the monument cost the Emperor five lakhs of rupees.

The mosque has three chapels, surmounted by domes. The main chapel is screened by the facade of the entrance, the doorway being recessed in a magnificent semi-dome. The chapels are connected with each other by cloisters of the Hindu type. At each end of the mosque there is a set of rooms for the Mullahs. There are extensive pillared cloisters on three sides of the spacious quadrangle. These cloisters are divided into small cells, and these cells formed the monastery and University of Sikri. The chief dome is beautifully decorated, and the hall below is among the finest in India, being ornamented with coloured designs, inlaid marble and glazed tiles. The principle "mehrab" is highly ornamental. To the right of it is the "mimbar" whence Akbar tried to read the Khuiba composed by Faizi, stammered and finally got down (on July 31, 1579).

The mosque is approached by two large gates on the south and east sides. The eastern gate is the royal entrance. But, the southern gate is the superb Baland Darwaza. This lofty gate is the highest in India and one of the highest in the world. This gate was built in 1575-76 to commemorate Akbar's victory in the Deccan. The year 1601-1602 mentioned in an inscription on the east side of the central gateway refers to Akbar's visit to Sikri and not to the erection of the Darwaza. The gateway is 134 ft. high, and is 176 ft.

### *Historic Mosques*

above the roadway. Across its front it is 130 ft. wide. Altogether, the gate is the glory of Sikri.

Akbar's mosque is architecturally the most successful building so far as its size and dignity are concerned. Its large quadrangle is highly impressive, and its open sweep is bound to attract the visitor. Its domes, kiosks, arcades and gateways are worthy of note, and its pillars are well grouped and balanced. The combination of arch and beam shows a synthesis of Hindu and Muslim art. The mural decoration inside the mosque is also pretty, and all the ornamentation is unexcelled in any other monument of Akbar. The Jame Masjid of Sikri is worthy of its royal builder's greatness and piety.

### MOTI MASJID

The Moti Masjid of Shahjahan inside the fort of Agra is a veritable masterpiece of Indo-Islamic art. In beauty and grace, the mosque is unparalleled in the world. The sublimity of its style and perfection of the proportions, not to speak of its pure white marble, combine to make it the finest mosque in the country. This great piece took seven years to build, and it cost three lakhs of rupees.

The size of the mosque is not very large. It measures 187 ft. by 234 ft. over all externally, the courtyard being 154 ft. by 158 ft. On three sides there is a low cloister. On the western side there are seven handsome arches. The top is crowned by three bulbous domes. The courtyard is paved with pure marble. The panels on the western wall are decorated, and at each corner of the sanctuary is an octagonal tower surmounted by a marble cupola. The building on the whole is severely simple, yet beautiful. There is hardly any other building in India in which the effect is produced with practically no decoration. The whole building is a gem of art, and is rightly called the Pearl mosque.

The approach to the mosque is extremely plain, so that one does not expect the beauty which marks the interior. When you enter the mosque, you are amazed at its elegance. The pure material strikes the eye, and the absence of ornament gives it a peculiar dignity which cannot be expressed

in words. The entire design is harmonious and pretty. In the placing of the domes, there is a fine rhythm, and each dome is wondrously executed. The domes are like bubbles which the gentlest breeze can pull away. The kiosks, aisles, arches and piers are all in harmony with the general design, and their artistry is above all praise.

There is a fine inscription in Persian inlaid in black marble. It is a poetic tribute to the grace of the building. It also mentions that it was completed towards the end of the 26th year of Shahjahan's reign in 1063 Hijri. Of all the marble creations of Shahjahan, this is unique, for the mosque is a memorable example of Indian workmanship.

The Jame Masjid of Agra was built by Shahjahan's daughter, Jahan-ara. It is planned after the model of the Delhi mosque, but is inferior in quality. It is not very large or ambitious, and is also not stylistically as good as the other great mosques of the period. It measures only 130 ft. by 100 ft. But, its well-balanced design gives it a pleasing appearance. Its arches are handsome, and its pinnacles are beautifully slender. The courtyard is impressive, and the entire frontage is pleasing.

The mosque has its defects too. The tameness of the plan is evident. The zig-zag striping of the domes is also not attractive. The design is also not academically correct. The arches are not enriched with foliations. The domes lack height and grace of colour. There are no minarets to give the mosque the desired elevation. Notwithstanding these defects, the mosque was finished in the year A.D. 1644 at a cost of five lakhs of rupees.

#### PROVINCIAL MOSQUES

Among the provincial mosques, mention must be made of the attractive and dignified Jame Masjids at the town of Etawah, Etah and Kanauj. These mosques, though situated in smaller towns, are very good examples of the class. Their elegance is striking, and their proportions are harmonious. These mosques show the creative genius of their local craftsmen. The beautiful frontal effect in each makes the mosques highly interesting.

## *Historic Mosques*

These mosques remind us of the Sharqi mosques of Jaunpur. It is certain that the art of Jaunpur cast its influence on the mosques of Etawah and Kanauj. This influence is proved by the presence of the arched propylon in the middle of the facades of these mosques. This propylon is the keynote of Sharqi style, and is rarely seen elsewhere. It is quite likely that this feature which is the characteristic of Jaunpur may have self-originated. The effect of these propylons was that the mosques had the appearance of fortresses. Was this an accident? It may be so. But, the chances are that in the early days of Islamization in India the faithful had to find protection behind defensive walls.

### AURANGZEB'S MOSQUES

No account of the historic mosques of Uttar Pradesh will be complete without a word about the mosques of the puritan Emperor Aurangzeb. The Jame Masjids of Varanasi and Mathura are the finest examples of this class. Unfortunately, these mosques are not as elegant as those of Akbar or Shahjahan. The standard of workmanship had fallen, and the puritanical builder had scared away the Hindu craftsmen. He demolished some of the local temples to build mosques. Beauty was not the desired end. Glorification of Islam was the immediate object. Art being secondary, these mosques impress by size rather than by grace. Sufficient money was not spent on these mosques, and the local temple material was chiefly used by the craftsmen. The mosques are therefore more conventional than original, and the design is bound by tradition. Nothing could illustrate more clearly the decadence in architectural style that was taking place now than a comparison of the mosques of Aurangzeb and those of his predecessors.

On the river bank at Varanasi stands the impressive looking mosque of Aurangzeb. Its minarets are very lofty and slender and these dominate the whole riverside by their height and proportions. These minarets are intended to overshadow the local temples, and so they have been made unusually high. It may be noted that they rise to a height of more than 250 ft. above the city ghats or bathing places in strange contrast to the fanes of the sacred Hindu City. It is

doubtless the most recognizable building in the whole city and the first to catch the eye. The view from the top of one of the minarets over the stream, far away to the plain below, and the remote horizon formed by the hills of Chunar, and the congested maze of the historic town all around creates an effect which cannot be easily forgotten.

The mosque built in 1669-70 was constructed on the ancient site of the Kirti Bisheshwar temple on the Pancha Ganga ghat, one of the most sacred sites in the city. Evidently, the mosque was built with the material of the former temple. It measures 170 ft. in length, and its minarets rose 147 ft. high from the terrace. The slope was only 9" in its entire length. The terrace is elevated about 80 ft. from the river-line. Recently, one of the minarets was damaged.

The Jame Masjid of Mathura was also built by the Emperor Aurangzeb at about the same time when the mosque of Varanasi was constructed. It was built on the site of the great Keshava Rai's temple which was demolished under the orders of the Emperor. This temple was specially objectionable to the king, for its railings were donated by Dara, his rival. The present mosque was constructed under the supervision of the governor, Abdul Nabi Khan.

Located in the centre of the city, the mosque dominates Mathura like a colossus. Its design is on the whole pretty original, and it reflects the combination of the brick and tile method of Lahore as seen in Wazir Khan's mosque, and the stone structure of Northern India. As a specimen of the interesting variety of mosque, it is worthy of note. It stands on a lofty basement, and its archways are now used for shops. Its eastern gateway is fairly high, and its upper storey served the purpose of a gallery. There are panels of coloured tiles which give the mosque a lively appearance. The minarets, kiosks and cupolas produce a colourful effect, while the facade of the mosque is truly striking.

#### LUCKNOW MOSQUES

After the death of Aurangzeb the scene of artistic activity shifted from Agra and Delhi to Lucknow where the Nawabs maintained the architectural traditions with a zeal which is

admirable. The Nawabs of Avadh were great builders in a way. Handicapped in a variety of ways, they built boldly and extravagantly still. Their mosques reflect their piety no less than an unalloyed love of art. They may not be as handsome as the Mughal mosques, yet they are sufficiently graceful and dignified. The Nawabs of Avadh could claim with justice that it was they who had kept the lamp of Indo-Muslim architecture burning in Hindustan despite mighty odds. The inferiority of the Lucknow mosques as compared to those of Agra or Jaunpur was largely a reflex of a changed situation arising from factors beyond the control of the Nawabs of Lucknow. Their financial resources were limited. Marble or sandstone was not easily available. Craftsmanship had declined after Aurangzeb in Northern India. Lastly, European influence was also responsible for the demoralization of architectural ideas and hybridization of designs.

Of the Lucknow mosques, that of Asaf-ud-Daulah is the most prominent. Its architectural appearance is indeed striking, for it stands at a proper angle with the scheme of the Imambara buildings. Its symmetrical position is in harmony with the conception of such a building. One notices a definite sweep of space in the wide facade and elevated basement of the mosque. The proportions are distinctly correct as they are dignified and handsome. There are defects also in the mosque. For example, there is an excess of ornamentation. Again, the domes are not well-shaped, and the perforated arcade is specially unpleasant. Despite these defects, however, the Asafi mosque is worthy of its builder—bold, extravagant and romantic. Its two lofty minarets reflect a virility of style which is truly notable.

The mosque to the west of the Husainabad Imambara of Lucknow begun so late as in the days of Muhammad Ali Shah is one of the most beautiful examples of the local art. The three well-balanced cupolas and the two lofty minarets together with the interior walls decorated with arabesques and the arches coloured in stucco indicate a high order of local craftsmanship, and are illustrative of the fact that the master builders could still produce truly Indian structures in spite of the debasing influence of contemporary pseudo-Italian art which was then in fashion at Lucknow.

The mosque which was the Jame Masjid of Nawabi Lucknow was built essentially in Mughal style. It has some of the features which went to make the Mughal mosques so handsome and dignified. It is true that the style is over-elaborated here, and the decorations are rather florid. Still, the mosque is one of the least hybrid creations in the Avadh Capital.

The development of mosque architecture in Uttar Pradesh, illustrated by the mosques of Jaunpur, Agra, Sikri, Etawah, Kannauj, Varanasi, Mathura, Etah and Lucknow, marks a phase of Indo-Islamic art which continued for centuries. The essential features, however, remained tied to convention, and there was little scope for originality or novelty. The *sahn* or open quadrangle, the *liwans* or the cloisters, the fountain in the centre for ablution, the pillared sanctuary to the west with the *mehrab*, *qibla*, and *mimbar* are all traditional, and these features are to be seen in the fifteenth century Jaunpur mosques as in the nineteenth century Lucknow mosques. If there was any originality, it was seen in design and decoration, no less than in material and elevation. And, if there was any beauty in the mosques, it was seen in domes, gateways and minarets.

## HISTORIC FORTS

In former times, Uttar Pradesh was studded with forts of all kinds, forts of stones, of brick and of mud, built by rulers, big and small, no less than by baronial chiefs and petty land-owners. Apart from cities which were usually walled and fortified, even villages were often turned into fortresses by local chieftains whose mud-built castles could afford the much-needed protection to the inhabitants in times of war, confusion and anarchy. The character of the alluvial Gangetic plain made fortification essential to the security of the main approaches. Rocky ridges and elevated mounds, deep jungles and circuitous pathways, river confluences and strategic cross-roads—all favoured the growth of both isolated place fortresses and large and magnificent fortress cities, devised for military purposes. The frequent wars and invasions, not to speak of the kaleidoscopic changes in the political fortunes of the local people, made the forts the rallying points of kingdoms and empires all through the ages from the ancient times down to the British conquest.

Nearly all the ancient fortresses of Uttar Pradesh are now mere mounds of desolation and heaps of ruin. Some of them were demolished and rebuilt in the medieval period. Broken mud ramparts and bastions are the only reminders of what once used to be massive fortifications in the bygone days. Garhwa, a fort of the Gupta Age, 25 miles south-west of Allahabad, is now, for example, no better than a mass of wreck. Again, the excavations at Kausambi, once the capital of the Vatsa Kingdom, have brought to light the remains of an extensive fort with a circuit of 23,100 ft., the ramparts whereof were 30 to 35 ft. high and the bastions being higher still. Take another instance. The fort of Kara, built in the days of Jaichandra of Kanauj, is equally dilapidated, as are the earthen fortifications of Jhansi, the ancient Pratisthanpuri, on the other side of Ganga, opposite Akbar's fort at Allahabad. The high mounds in different parts of Uttar Pradesh still indicate the forgotten vestiges of ancient

forts of kingdoms like Hastinapur, Mathura, Kanauj, Kosala, Kashi, Kausambi and Prayag.

#### FORTRESS ARCHITECTURE

Fortress architecture received a great impetus in the medieval and more modern times during Muslim rule. Turkish, Pathan and Mughal conquerors and their lieutenants established fortified cities to find refuge behind defensive walls in times of stress and storm. Most of these forts have survived, even though they are shorn of their former glory. Some of them with their noble battlements, precipitous scarps, bastioned walls and underground passages and vaults are as imposing, as they are architecturally graceful. The forts of Agra and Allahabad are indeed masterpieces of the contemporary art of building.

The medieval forts of Uttar Pradesh are generally of solid sandstone. The walls are thick, while the bastion and ramparts are stern and formidable. Construction used to be as ingenious, as it was elegant. From the base to the top the stone walls were joined by strong iron rings so closely that even a hair could not find its way into the joints. Apart, however, from the skilful engineering, the forts were designed and built like pieces of fine architecture, for into their composition were introduced graceful features like fosses, battlements, embrasures, machicolations, stringcourses, towers, kiosks, cupolas, gateways and decorated palaces and mosques which exhibit a new trend in Indo-Islamic architecture. Strength and beauty were combined so dexterously as to give the forts a pleasing appearance.

In short, forts of the medieval period were on a bigger, more elaborate and more artistic scale than were ever known in previous centuries. They marked the culmination of the architectural tradition which had been growing for a long time past. The forts were now of varying dimensions and designs. Most of them were placed on river banks along strategic highways, though some crowned rocky eminences or earthen mounds on the open level plain. Most of them have multiple walls and battlemented gateways for the protection of the inner citadels and palaces.

Among the early medieval forts of Uttar Pradesh, that of Jaunpur stands in a class by itself. Even though most part of it is in a ruined state, it has still an abiding interest of its own. The town of Jaunpur, situated on the river Gomti, thirty-four miles north-west of Varanasi, was one of strategic outposts which Firuz Tughluq, the Sultan of Delhi, established in the middle of the fourteenth century. Its fort, meant to be the eastern bulwark of the Delhi Sultanate, was strong and purposeful. Its style, at once bold and elegant, exercised not a little influence on the fort architecture of the age. Essentially Muslim in character, it yet embodied the purely indigenous features in such a manner as reflected a subtle blend of the best of the two styles. The aesthetic excellence in the conception of the fort, which is still faintly traceable in its pitifully devastated state, is expressive of the refinement and self-exaltation of the Sharqi rulers under whose brilliant rule Jaunpur became the Shiraz, or prime centre of art and learning of India.

The fort is now little more than a wreckage. Even those parts which had escaped destruction at the hands of Sultan Sikandar Lodi at the end of the fifteenth century were dismantled by the British after the Mutiny of 1857. Even the stone walls were pulled down. With them was demolished the fine Sharqi palace in the fort—the Chihil Satun, or hall of forty pillars built by Ibrahim Sharqi. The fort itself conveys the impression of an irregular quadrangle. Begun by Firuz Tughluq and finished by Ibrahim Naik Barbak, it occupies the site of the older Hindu stronghold of Kerakot.

In its construction, the material was mainly obtained from the temples demolished in the vicinity and at Zafarabad. When the towers were destroyed in 1859, the inner side of almost every stone was found ornamented with carved decorations familiar in temple structures. Even in those parts of the walls which have survived such carved stones are occasionally traceable still. Such carvings were at places boldly put up as ornamental features, as in the remaining gateway. The handsome niches thereof are embellished with bands, one of which exhibits no less than seven typical designs within the space of 12 ft.

The eastern gateway which is now practically the only relic of the forgotten splendour of the fort is in itself a notable piece of art. Its structural details, no less than its exterior appearance, are of the utmost interest. The flanking bastions are of a peculiar design for they are much bigger at the base than above. They are loop-holed and also supported by heavy battlements. Shapely barbicans resting on moulded corbels jut out vigorously from the eastern facade. The gateway itself is likewise embattled, and the approach through it is overlooked by an elegant and well-built arch with protruding piers on either side. The gateway is 46½ ft. in height up to the level of the battlements, and about 16 ft. in depth, the entrance having the customary small apartments on both sides. The main archway and its spandrels are handsomely decorated with *kashani* work or encaustic tiles having multi-coloured patterns in relief.

Among the remains inside the fort, there are only two noteworthy structures standing intact. One is of special importance for it represents an almost immaculate specimen of an attractive Turkish *hammam* or bath of Ibrahim's reign. Its compact massivity is as conspicuous as are its expansive proportions. The other building is a rather inconspicuous mosque erected by Ibrahim Naik Barbak. As a mosque, it is of curious design. It has no minarets, their place having been taken by a remaining pillar standing at a little distance in front of the mosque. The building is 130 ft. in length and 22 ft. in width. It forms an unpretentious arcade supported by decorated pillars of different shapes and designs. These pillars which are of Hindu style have no plinths and some of them are even upside down, indicating thereby an improvised use of indigenous material.

#### AGRA FORT

The fort of Agra, a memorable example of Akbar's style of architecture, is a pearl in a setting of glistening red sandstone. Facing the waters of the Yamuna, this noble stronghold, the finest of its class in Uttar Pradesh, breathes of the wars, the conquests and the imperial glory of the Great Mughals, and mirrors in stone and marble, the epic splendours of the reigns of Akbar, Jahangir, Shahjahan and

### *Historic Forts*

Aurangzeb during whose time Agra was, for long, the metropolis of a far-flung empire stretching from Afghanistan to Bengal and from the Deccan to Kashmir.

The fort at Agra, a mile and a half in circumference, spreading crescentwise along the right bank of Yamuna was built by Akbar on so vast a scale that it took about eight years (1565-73) and cost thirty-five lakhs of rupees to complete. The fort marks the site of an older Rajput citadel, called Badalgarh, which was demolished to make room for Akbar's new fort. Of the four gateways, the so-called Amar Singh Gate on the south and the Delhi Gate on the north are the most important. The river gate and the north-east gate are now closed and no longer in use. The stronghold is enclosed by two massive and lofty walls, loop-holed and embattled all along. Such was the strength of the fort that in Mughal times it was deemed absolutely impregnable.

According to the *Ain-i-Akbari*, Akbar built inside the fort over five hundred buildings of red sandstone, but most of them were later demolished by his grandson, Shahjahan, to make room for his luxuriously designed and ornamented marble edifices. But, the so-called Jahangiri Mahal, one of Akbar's own palaces, is still happily preserved. It is remarkable for the grace and vigour which animated the great builder's style of architecture. Its heavy brackets, decorated terraces, projecting eaves, serpentine struts, crenellated panels, oblong recesses and stately pillars, not to speak of the trabeated system of construction characteristic of Hindu architecture, are all illustrative of the broadminded tolerance and aesthetic taste of a great statesman who sought to evolve a national school of architecture of which both the Hindus and the Muslims could be proud.

#### INSIDE BUILDINGS

But, it is Shahjahan who created most of the sumptuous buildings inside the fort. His works of art in marble, which have eclipsed the sandstone structures of his grandfather, mark a phase of construction of extraordinary delicacy and grandeur. If Akbar's style had marked the epic age of Mughal

architecture, that of his grandson ushered in its lyric age. Shahjahan's buildings, which were more Persianized than Indian in style, embody features which herald the emergence of a new age of "Picture" architecture in his reign. Pietra dura inlay, ornate dado, cusped arch, bulbous dome, tapering pillar, voluted bracket capital and foliated bases gave the marble creations a bewitching aspect reminiscent of the Golden Age of Mughal building art.

Of Shahjahan's creations in the Agra fort, the pearl mosque, a pure white marble structure of austere and chaste beauty, is the finest gem and a unique triumph of Shahjahan's style of architecture. Its arcaded cloisters, graceful domes, enrailed arches, groined vaults and sculptured panels, make it one of the most beautiful mosques of the world. Among other famous edifices, mention must be made of the Khas Mahal, the Shish Mahal, the Musamman Burj, the Diwan-i-Khas and the Diwan-i-Am to loiter through whose marble precincts is to recall visions of their departed greatness. They are caskets of bejewelled ornaments set in a framework of milk-white marble. The delicate inlay of jasper, cornelian and turquoise, along with the radiant hues of gold and other colours, have transformed these miracles of marble into fairy palaces of the Arabian Nights.

Aurangzeb, the puritan Emperor, did little to enlarge and beautify the handiwork of his predecessors. He was, however, responsible for the Sher-i-Haji or ramparts, the moat outside and the five gateways three of which, according to the Alamgir Namah, faced the Hathi Pol, Khizri and Akbari gates respectively, the fourth on the right hand of the gateway towards the Shah Burj and the fifth towards the riverside in front of the Khurd Darwaza situated below the Darshan balcony.

#### ALLAHABAD FORT

The impressive fort of Allahabad is the most capacious of its type built by Akbar. In his reign, it rivalled, in design and elegance, even the metropolitan fort of Agra. Its foundation was laid by the Emperor in 1583. Owing to its location on the confluence of the Ganga and Yamuna, the fort is necessarily of the triangular shape of a wedge or

segment of a circle. Its sombre battlemented walls of red sandstone are as imposing as those of Agra. It had three important gateways with high flanking towers. One overlooked the Ganga to the east and one the Yamuna to the south, while the chief portal on the city side was faced by a wide moat and a heavy out-work like that of Agra fort. It is worthy of note that the fort of Allahabad was the chief strategic spear-head to the expanding eastern frontier of the Mughal Empire, for in those days Allahabad commanded the direct approach to the Subah of Bengal, and, as such, it was fitting that the City should have been provided with a strong and defensible fort of its own.

Unfortunately, much of the original roofed area inside the fort has disappeared in modern times, and the interior now is bereft of its former glory and architectural interest. Of the old remains, the famous Asokan pillar standing opposite the main entrance still testifies to the fact that Allahabad had once been incorporated in the ancient empire of Magadh. On this pillar is engraved a poetic tribute to the glories of Samudra Gupta, the Emperor of Magadh, who has been styled the Indian Napoleon. Of equal interest is the famous Patalpuri temple, another ancient relic of Prayag, which is one of the oldest pre-Muslim buildings in Uttar Pradesh. It stands near the northern wall of the arsenal in the vicinity of the river gate. It is now underground, evidently as a consequence of the construction of the fort, which necessitated the elevation of the inner level. Before the fort was constructed, the temple must have stood on high ground, and it was close to it that stood the celebrated Akshaya Vat or undying fig tree from which pious devotees used to fling themselves down into the Kanya Kup (wish-fulfilling well) below, or merely suspended themselves by hooks in order to seek salvation. This practice was stopped by Akbar once for all.

But the most picturesque relic of Akbar's time is, of course, the pretty Baradari or pavilion which served as the Mughal Governor's residence. Its chief attraction lies in the artistic arrangement of pillars and in the successful combination of the horizontal and peristylar forms of construction. The elaboration of its design and its elegant

decorations are symptomatic of the growing might and prosperity of Akbar's empire.

When the fort of Allahabad came under British control, it was transformed into a modern stronghold after the school of Vauban, a task which was completed in 1838 or thereabouts to the detriment of the fort's original beauty and interest. The old towers were pruned down, and the ramparts were obscured by turfed and sloping glacis. On the riverside the battlements were removed. The upper storeys of the main gate were dismantled with the result that the carved stone work and frescoes in the interior were sacrificed. Even the old palace was converted into an arsenal. New and ungainly modern barracks were put up which have only served to mar the pristine appearance of the fort more glaringly.

#### CHUNAR FORT

The celebrated fort of Chunar, standing on the bank of the Ganga at a distance of 21 miles from Mirzapur and 19 miles from Varanasi, is another historic fort of Uttar Pradesh. The supposed resemblance of the fort to a cyclopean footprint, with the toes and ball of the foot hanging on the river and the heel on the landside has, so the tradition runs, given Chunar its designation, which is compounded of the Sanskrit words—*Charan Adri*—or footprint hill. Legend adds that it is the footprint of some giant of the Dwapar Yuga, who, while he was on his way from the Himalayas to Cape Comorin, set his foot upon the ridge for rest and imprinted thereon his gigantic footmark. The fort commanded the highway to Bengal, and was thus the key to that province. Its possession was therefore vital to a medieval ruler who claimed mastery of the eastern provinces. That it frequently changed hands and successively passed from Sher Shah to Humayun, and then to Akbar indicates its chequered history in the Mughal period.

The fort of Chunar marks an ancient site, and crowns the summit and sides of a large and lofty sandstone ridge, an outlier of the Vindhyan Range, jutting out into the Ganga and deflecting the river to the north. It stretches

practically north and south, 800 yards long, 133 to 300 broad and 80 to 175 ft. above the level of the surrounding plain, the total circuit measuring about 3,400 yards. The view of the fort from the river is indeed charming and memorable. Successive walls and towers have imparted a massive solidity to the fort. The rocky height is enclosed on every side by a steep escarpment flanked, wherever the curves permitted it, with stately towers and bastions of various dimensions. On the top of the rock there is an old palace—a central dome supported by many arched chambers wherein there are still traces of painting and carving. On one side of this stands a towering edifice which used to be the residence of the Mughal governors.

The quaintest relic of this place is the shrine of the saint Bhartri Nath, where lies a big slab of black basalt. On this stone, according to legend, God rests for nine hours every day, repairing for the three other hours to Varanasi. So it was popularly believed that Chunar could never be surprised by an enemy except between the morning hours, six and nine. Adjacent to this spot, there is the palace where Rajas of Varanasi had all the marriages of the family celebrated.

KEY TO EAST

Chunar became the key to the east in the sixteenth century during the struggles between the Pathans and the Mughals for mastery over Bengal. Babur came here in 1529. Sher Shah occupied it by marrying Lad Malika, the widow of Taj Khan, Ibrahim Lodi's governor. He then built a big bath and an armoury. Later Humayun besieged it for six months and captured it. It passed into the hands of Sher Shah once again, and it was not until 1574 that it came into the possession of Akbar who built the western gate of the fort. In the reign of Aurangzeb, the Alamgiri mosque was built under the supervision of Mirza Bahadur. The fort remained under Mughal control up to 1750 when it passed under the ruler of Avadh.

In 1772, it was obtained by the British East India Company who established in it a depot for artillery and ammunition. After Chet Singh's insurrection in 1781,

Warren Hastings escaped from Varanasi to this fort and resided in the Baradari. In 1791 the place became the headquarters of the invalid battalions of troops. It was also a place of confinement for State prisoners from 1815 onwards. Among the prominent internees were Trimbakji Danglia, the favourite counsellor of the last Peshwa, Nawab Munna Jan and the Badshah Begum of Avadh, and, last but not the least, the widowed queen of Ranjit Singh, Rani Jhindan. The fort was garrisoned until 1890, when the troops were finally removed. It was then turned into a convalescent jail, and more recently into a reformatory school for juvenile delinquents. It housed a training camp for the refugee women from East Bengal.

#### JHANSI FORT

No account of the famous forts of Uttar Pradesh would be complete without reference to the renowned fort of Jhansi. It vividly recalls the poignant saga of Rani Lakshmi Bai's heroic stand against the British forces during the days of the Great Rebellion of 1857. The matchless valour of the warlike queen is now a matter of recorded history. But, imagination requires little stimulus, save the sombre shadows of the fort's grim walls to conjure up the bravery, the patriotism and the grandeur of her fight for liberty and honour.

Towering bold and definite on a bald granite rock and overlooking the city nestling underneath, the fort of Jhansi was of great strategic importance in the days of the Company, for it commanded the road leading from Hindustan to the Deccan. Its encircling wall follows the configuration of the hillock, and, barring the southern end, it runs generally on a level but little higher than the ground at the base. In appearance, the fort is a rough square, with a short extension of similar shape near the chief portal on the left. One has to approach it by an ascending path from the south side, which goes straight up to the main gateway and thence into the inner citadel. The walls are embattled at the summit and reinforced at intervals by massive bastions.

At the present moment there is little of special interest inside the fort. On the sloping rock towards the east stands

a small shrine where Rani Lakshmi Bai used to come for daily worship. On a lower level than the fort towards the west lies a garden, and below it there is an excellent old well. Close to it there is the small temple dedicated to Shiva.

In Jhansi lived Rani Lakshmi Bai, the widowed queen of the Maratha Prince of Jhansi, tall in figure, handsome in appearance, martial in bearing, youthful, intrepid, ambitious and unyielding, who had been deeply offended by the unjust confiscation of her adopted son's estate under the Doctrine of Lapse. The mutiny of the sepoys in 1857 inspired her with the hope of wreaking her vengeance, and she came out of her seclusion to lead the rebels. Her troops made an attack on the fort in June, 1857. The enterprise at once succeeded, and the British defenders had to surrender themselves and their arms. The frightful massacre of Europeans that followed the initial triumph of the rebel forces, was an outburst of fury and madness which it was impossible for the queen to control. In any case, her own complicity in this dark deed is not provided by any trustworthy evidence.

#### TRAGIC END

The Rani's victory proved short-lived, for in March, 1858, the British Commander, Sir Huge Rose, laid siege to the fort with a large army and augmented resources. The Rani offered brave resistance which was of no avail in the end. She fought like a common trooper, and supervised the batteries in person. Robed in military apparels, a red blouse, trousers and a white turban on the head, she moved from post to post, and inspired her troops by her presence and patriotic appeals. The defence was heroic, but the rebel army at last, being outnumbered and outgeneralled, broke under superior pressure. In the hour of defeat, it fought with determined fury and invincible courage, neither soliciting, nor giving quarter. While retreating they struck back doggedly with swords in both hands, until they were killed. Indeed, never had the rebels covered themselves with greater glory than at the fort of Jhansi under the inspiring leadership of the Rani.

The tragic end may be briefly summed up. When all hope was lost, the Rani jumped in the darkness of night

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from a window in the turret, mounted her favourite horse and rode away with a speed which amazed even her followers. Her soldierly death later at the battle of Gwalior forms an unforgettable chapter in the annals of the Great Rebellion. Of her, it was justly said by the enemy commander, Sir Huge Rose, that she was "the bravest and best military leader of the rebels". The citizens of Free India cannot forget that the fort of Jhansi stands eternally consecrated to the deathless memory of the Indian Joan of Arc, Rani Lakshmi Bai.

## HILL STATIONS

All along the north of Uttar Pradesh stretches in pristine grandeur the loftiest mountain range of the world, the Himalayas. Its very name (meaning, in Sanskrit, the abode of snow) conjures up visions of snowy walls, standing clear cut against the vivid blue of the sky, and looking so tall and majestic as to make one feel that they might well be the Olympian mansions of gods and goddesses. On the lower slopes of the snow-capped mountains and in the recesses of alluring glades on the top of enchanting ridges have grown up charming places of summer resort, which are the glory of Uttar Pradesh. Indeed, no other part of India can boast of roundings, the hill stations of Uttar Pradesh are unrivalled in India.

The hill stations of Uttar Pradesh are mainly the creation of British enterprise, for it was out of the storms and turmoils of the Nepal War that the British could acquire the Himalayan regions on which they are now dotted. They are among the healthiest beauty spots in India, and there is a peculiar charm about them which is not easy to define. In the bewitching grace of their kaleidoscopic scenery, the awe-inspiring splendour of their lofty snow ranges, the sparkling buoyancy of their climate and atmosphere, and the liveliness and fasciuation of their life and surroundings, hill stations of Uttar Pradesh are unrivalled in India.

In fact, the Himalayan cities of our State are invested with an interest which is truly romantic. In them one will find elements of interest which are as diverse as they are stirring. For example, Mussoorie speaks of the carefree Bohemianism which in the official and orderly life of Naini Tal one cannot dream of. Ranikhet and Chakrata, on the other hand, have an appeal which the seclusion and quietness of a military station alone can create. Almora, on the contrary, is an interesting old city where the memories of its

medieval greatness still cling rather strangely to a new and modern setting.

#### NAINI TAL

Few hill stations can beat Naini Tal for sheer beauty that appeals. And, as the summer headquarters of the Uttar Pradesh Government, it has an individuality of its own. Here, in this sinait summer capital, the elite of the whole State gather for pleasure as well as business. But, the real glory of Naini Tal is in no way dependent on the accident that it has become the resort of the official hierarchy. It is the countless attractions of its scenic charms which have made it a gem among the hill stations. Besides, it is the only big hill station which boasts of a grand and extensive lake at a high altitude. A lake of this type is found only in the valley of Kashmir.

Naini Tal remained isolated and unnoticed up to 1839 when it was for the first time officially taken notice of in a government report. There is a quaint tradition about an unnamed European gentleman who first chanced to see this beauty spot, and-for a long time-did-not-part-with his secret. From time to time he came here alone and camped in this hilly paradise of his choice. But, it is not known how the secret finally leaked out, and how the place attracted the notice of the officials. From 1842 onwards, this hill station grew rapidly in size and population, and soon after it became the summer capital of the State.

The lake gives the place its name, for "Tal" means, in Hindi, a lake. It is the veritable jewel of the station. One mile long and four hundred yards broad, the lake has a total area of about one hundred and twenty acres. It nestles beautifully at the foot of the hill ranges which surround it on three sides, leaving the fourth side which is the entrance to Naini Tal open. Its flood level is 6,410 ft. above the sea, and its depth varies from five fathoms on the north side to nearly sixteen in the widest position. At the end there are sulphur springs. The main thoroughfare of the city runs by the side of the lake, and most of the public buildings, private residences, hotels, shops and flats either overlook it, or are very close to it. The famous Naina Devi temple is

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just on the shore. The lake forms the hub of the town, and it is its chief point of attraction. Boating over its calm and limpid waters is a pleasure which cannot be described adequately. The sun-dried visitor from the parched plains gets rejuvenated in body and soul when he enjoys the cool bracing air of the hills, while sitting or lying on a gently gliding boat over the lake. Life then is scarcely existence, it is a luxury.

On the north and south sides of the lake rise tall ridges which are covered with virgin forests rising up to high altitudes. The top of the highest level reaches to about nine thousand feet above the sea-level. From these heights one can get a fine glimpse of the snow range as also of the distant level plains. The two conspicuous peaks are the China, 8,568 ft. and the Deopatta, 7,990 ft. which are on the north-west side. The finest snow view is, however, obtained from the east side from Sher-ka-Danda. To the west there is a big area of more gently sloping hillside out of which has been ingeniously excavated a level recreation ground rightly known as the Flats. The upper market (Malli Tal) is situated above this ground, and the fashionable private houses and notable public buildings are dotted all along the sides of the valley. At the east end lies the lower market (Talli Tal), stretching along the external edge of the range.

### COUNTRY OF LAKES

Naini Tal is located in a wonderful lake country, for there are numerous lovely lakes in the surrounding land. If the visitor likes to marvel at natural lakes and thinks that time is nothing, he can go out of Naini Tal to many neighbouring Tals which are the most noteworthy spots in the Kumaon Hills. No other hill region in the country can boast of such a multiplicity of fine lakes. Those who are fond of hiking, painting, fishing or shooting will find the lake country a veritable paradise.

The landscape around has colour and animation which are to be seen to be believed. Hiking in such a country means an arcadian life—bathing, lazing, idling and making excursions into vales and hills. Those who are painters will

find time at their disposal all too inadequate and the palette all too scanty, to capture and recreate the rich variety of colour that Nature has bountifully spread out all around. And, to those who love to wield the rod, the Kumaon Hills offer facilities for fishing which are not easily available elsewhere. As for shooting, both big and small game are to be found in abundance in the adjacent forests.

Among the innumerable resorts which lie within an easy distance from Naini Tal are Sat Tal, Bhim Tal, Naokuchia Tal, Khurpa Tal and Ramgarh. These are admirable natural spots where one can enjoy mountain and lake scenery of the wildest kind. Those who have seen this lake country place it in a class with the renowned lake centres of Kashmir. But, in actual fact, the Kumaon Hills are in a category apart. The grand juxtaposition of steep mountains and crystal lakes form a background which can be better felt than described.

#### MUSSOORIE

Mussoorie is the queen among the hill resorts of Uttar Pradesh. It glories in the name of the Happy Valley, and in reality lives up to this expressive designation. It is not an official hill top, and has none of the punctilious stiffness that casts the halo over Naini Tal. So, in the abandon of its more democratic set-up, it spells fun and relaxation, gladness and joviality, no less than high life and unconventionality. That is the greatest point of attraction in Mussoorie. Here one may throw aside the tiresome proprieties and vexatious precedence of an official metropolis, and just be a child of the hills, of the forests and of the radiant valleys.

Fourteen miles away from Dehra Dun, and with an elevation of over 6,500 ft. above the sea-level, Mussoorie lies on the first range of hills running east and west, parallel to the Siwaliks. It is a peerless jewel with the heaven-kissing mountains of the world on the north and with the colourful expanse of the Dun on the south for setting. Such is its fine location that from the Mall one can command a distant view of the Ganga on one side, the Yamuna on the other and Dehra Dun in front.

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It is difficult to account for the name Mussoorie which is a peculiar word. As the usual Indian pronunciation is "Mansuri", it has been surmised that the Mansuri trees growing on the hills may have been responsible for the name of the place. Another far-fetched theory is that these hills must have been the headquarters of a notorious dacoit, named Mansur. The history of Mussoorie is, however, interesting. The old records indicate that, in 1811, the place was purchased for a small sum by a European gentleman, named Major Hearsey. He resold it in 1812 to the East India Company for a sum of Rs.1,200 to be paid annually to him and to his heirs. After the Nepal War more territories, including the Dun Valley, were obtained, and a convalescent home for soldiers could be started soon after in Landour. In 1842, Dost Muhammad, the ex-Amir of Afghanistan, was brought to this place as a prisoner. In 1853, Prince Dalip Singh, son of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, was also brought here. The Municipal Hall was built in 1880. In 1883, another ex-Amir of Afghanistan, Yakub Khan, was sent to this place. When in 1901 the Hardwar-Dehra Dun railway line was opened, all difficulties of travel were removed, and Mussoorie rapidly grew up into a popular hill resort.

The hill range on which Mussoorie is situated ascends from the plains rather gradually in the manner of a vast horse-shoe, and on the top level it embraces a number of ridges between which are gorges of all dimensions. Most of the residences here are at an average elevation ranging from 6,000 to 7,200 ft., principally on the southern side. One gets a picturesque view of the distant peaks towards the north, although the view over the Dun Valley and across the Siwaliks is equally superb. The hillside overlooking the plains is open to the prevailing winds, and so is rather bare. One does not see an abundance of pine and deodar trees which are a common feature of some other Himalayan hill stations. Only on the north side there are deep forests, and among the trees oak, rhododendron and fir predominate.

The climate of Mussoorie is delightful, and it suits all types of visitors. Mussoorie is cool and pleasant from April onwards, and its greatest advantage is that it is not a damp place like some other hill resorts. July and August form the rainy season when Mussoorie gets a fairly good rainfall. The

season immediately after the rains is specially enjoyable, for Mussoorie then has perhaps the best climate. The air is bracing and magnificent, and the snow view is clear and panoramic. The whole town looks like a green and smiling holiday land, and it creates an impression on the mind which cannot be easily forgotten.

#### RANIKHET AND CHAKRATA

Among the military hill stations of Uttar Pradesh, Ranikhet is decidedly the most pleasing and inviting. It is situated at an elevation of 6,000—7,000 ft. above sea-level, and is easily approachable from Naini Tal and Almora.

Though not a big or gay resort, it has certain attractions which are not easy to find elsewhere. It is the only hill sanatorium in Uttar Pradesh where all the roads are motorable. This is an advantage which one cannot dream of in most hill stations. Besides, here the views of the eternal snows are perhaps the best, for they are as near perfection as possible. When the weather is clear and cloudless, the view one gets of the majestic snows of the Naina Devi and Trisul are thrilling and rapturous. The snows seem to rise higher and higher in all their unalloyed glory until they touch the translucent sky. Ranikhet is well worth a visit, if for nothing else, for its snow view alone.

Ranikhet is also famed for its health-giving pine forests. All the hillsides are beautifully clothed with tall and slender pine trees, and they enhance not only the radiance but also the salubrity of this attractive hill retreat. Again, in sheer peace, repose and unobtrusiveness, Ranikhet is unbeatable. Those who wish to avoid crowd and noise, and long for a restful holiday in sylvan surroundings cannot go to a better place than Ranikhet. Here one can get solitude day after day and week after week. Ranikhet is especially noted for its fruit orchards the like of which one cannot find anywhere else. In sheltered places fruits like apples, apricots and pears flourish abundantly, and their profusion and variety are indeed striking.

Though little known and less frequented than most other hill stations, Chakrata, a military station, is one of the most invigorating and beauteous spots in India. It has

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an appeal which one can very well feel, but cannot talk about. It is one of the healthiest places in the country, and for children and invalids it is an ideal spot.

Chakrata lies on the western side of the Dun Valley, and is about 62 miles from Dehra Dun. It is 38 miles from Mussoorie by the hill road. It was in 1869 that the first British regiment is stated to have gone to this place, and all the modern improvements are said to have been begun at that time. Since then it has been resorted to by the military during the summer. The elevation of Chakrata is 6,885 ft. above sea-level, and the climate is exceptionally dry and healthy. The rainfall is reasonably sufficient and is much less than in other hill stations. A rich mountain spring which is remarkably pure supplies good and plentiful water to the town.

Few hill stations can compare with Chakrata for neat and shady walks, and for scope and facilities for outdoor excursions into hills and forests. The mountain landscape around the place is glorious and resplendent, and the serene and idyllic surroundings are as immaculate as they are restful. The memorable descent to the huge and impressive waterfall, the grand climb to the towering Deoban hills which rise to a height of 9,000 ft. above sea-level, and afford an entrancing view from east and west of the distant snow peaks, and, last but not the least, the picturesque bear garden ravine with its grim and precipitous cliffs are some of the attractions which cannot be hurriedly lost sight of.

Chakrata is easy of access, and it can be reached from Dehra Dun in a few hours. Though its character as a military station is its main trait, it is a place which will satisfy all tastes.

### LANSDOWNE

Lansdowne is a diminutive and pretty hill station which is now a military headquarters. The cantonment was first established here in 1887. The ridge on which it stands rises from 5,000 to 6,000 ft. above sea-level. The average elevation is 5,600 ft. The place is at a distance of 28 miles from Kotdwara station on the Northern Railway, to which it is connected by a good motor road.

The hill station is finely situated, for it commands a remarkable panoramic view of the snowy peaks, including the Badrinath block. The town nestles inside a forest of pine and oak trees, and has a salubrious climate. The place offers facilities for fishing, for there is very good Mahseer fishing in the rivers of Lower Garhwal. This hill station, though not very busy and populous yet, is growing in size and importance, and it bids fair to be a rival of other sister hill stations. If you want to avoid the din and bustle of a crowded town, and need a quiet and serene place for rest and holiday, you have to choose Lansdowne for a hard-earned vacation.

#### ALMORA

Almora is a bright little hill town which boasts of a historic past. It is the one hill station in Uttar Pradesh which does not owe its origin to British brains. Comparisons are odious, but the fact remains that the advantages offered by Almora for both recreation and cheapness of living are unparalleled. It has none of the high-brow exclusiveness which characterises most other hill stations, and is a well-favoured place for rest, where everybody ought to feel at home. If one does not care much for fun and frivolity and wants a quiet and cheap place to spend a few days, there is no more convenient place than Almora. For invalids and aged people, Almora is excellent, and for those who suffer from any lung complaints, it has no equal.

As the principal town of the district of the same name, Almora has a character of its own. It has a permanent population all through the year, and is not deserted after the summer as most other hill stations are. All the normal amenities which a district headquarters town can offer are available here, and it has in addition all the attractions of a hill resort. Its elevation is not very high, for it is only 5,500 ft. above sea-level. So, the climate is on the whole moderate and is not very rigorous as it is in other places with higher altitudes.

The town is built on a bare ridge, and therefore does not possess a sylvan look. But, the view of the snows that one can obtain here is exceedingly fine. And, even though

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the town itself is not much woody, there are gardens, orchards and forest glades in the vicinity, where one will gasp at the sublimity of the landscape. With a strong pair of shoes and a heavy stick, a visitor will find that walking is a luxury in Almora, and will be really surprised at the long distances he can easily cover every day.

Almora's history goes back to the Chand Rajas who made it their chief city in the sixteenth century. Throughout the medieval times, it remained a populous centre. In the eighteenth century, the Rohillas invaded the land for the first time. They pillaged it ruthlessly, but after sometime they grew weary of the poverty and destitution of the surrounding country, and decided to leave—thereafter, the place passed under Gurkha rule. In the Nepal War, Almora was an important battleground, and the British and the Gurkhas fought here with a determination which was as savage as it was heroic. After British annexation, Almora rapidly grew into a prosperous district town.

If there is wanderlust in the blood of the visitor, he may here find a few coolies and baggage ponies and take the road through dense forests to the beautiful Pindari glacier (13,000 ft.). It is situated at the base of Nanda Kot, and is about six or seven marches from Almora. The best time for this trip is, of course, during May or early in October. The Pindari glacier can be reached in about a week's time without much discomfort or hazard. The whole route is memorable for its gay and multi-coloured flowers, smiling glens, dense woodlands and imposing snows. Being the most well-known ice-field in India, the Pindari glacier richly merits a visit, and the journey is not half so expensive as many people think it to be.

Both for people of moderate means and for those to whom the financial side is not of primary importance, Uttar Pradesh offers a holiday in its lovely hill stations, which will live in the memory as an unforgettable episode and will richly repay the time and expense.

## MEDIEVAL INDIAN ARCHITECTURE

The most noteworthy feature of India's national culture has been its unique capacity for steady and continuous assimilation of the diverse elements which it has received from outside. It is this remarkable vitality which has kept the continuity of Indian culture unbroken through the ages. This process of dynamic synthesis not only saved the soul of India in the midst of political upheavals, but led to a cultural rapprochement between the two rich and potent cultures—Hindu and Muslim. One cannot forget the basic fact of history that, in medieval times, there sprang up a vital movement of cultural intermingling, despite all the inevitable conflicts in the domain of politics. In all spheres of cultural activity, there was an exchange of ideas which provided an enduring meeting ground between the two major communities.

This process of assimilation or synthesis was nowhere more spectacular and concrete than in the domain of architecture which still survives as a living symbol of national unity. This process was not merely a matter of coincidence or chance, but was the result chiefly of royal patronage or initiative. The fusion of Hindu and Muslim style was fostered by the Muslim rulers and also by Hindu Rajas and their feudatories. The blending of architectural ideas and tastes, and of spiritual and aesthetic concepts produced an unparalleled synthesis and a new artistic revival which had all the glory of a spontaneous efflorescence of art. The new architecture was one whereof both the Hindus and Muslims could be equally proud, and in the creation of which both the communities made a supreme co-operative effort of a heroic nature.

### PROCESS OF ASSIMILATION

The manner in which the fusion resulted from an impact of virile realism on philosophic idealism, of the

concrete on the abstract, and of the arcuate on the trabeate is of special interest. It resulted from the action and reaction of two distinct and independent architectural styles upon each other, and this artistic interaction was so complex that it is often difficult to ascribe any of the constituent elements to its original source. Rarely in the history of art has the spectacle been seen of two types, so powerful and so richly developed, as the Hindu and the Muslim, meeting and interacting on each other. The very dissimilarities which marked each of them make the story of their impact peculiarly instructive. The building of mosques, tombs, palaces, and cities was the favourite hobby of the Muslim rulers. This allowed much scope both to the artists and craftsmen who came from outside and of the Hindu master-builders and craftsmen. The local or indigenous artists evinced a wonderful capacity for adaptation when they had to work under Muslim patronage or inspiration. As the number of foreign artists was always comparatively negligible, the Muslim rulers were obliged to depend on local artistic genius. So, although the Hindu craftsmen had to adhere to Muslim tastes and conventions as far as possible, they could find ample scope for the introduction of some of their own ideas and standards of art and craftsmanship which were alien to the ideals of Muslim art. This led to a blending of forms which gave the Muslim buildings of India a look perceptibly unlike that of similar buildings in Muslim countries outside India. In fact, according to authorities like Mr. Saladin, Indo-Muslim style of architecture differs radically from its Islamic prototype in other Muslim countries of Asia.

It is this glaring divergence which led E. B. Havell, an outspoken admirer of the Hindu genius, to reject the term "Indo-Saracenic" as "an unscientific classification based on the fundamental error which vitiates the works of most European histories of Indian civilization". However, even Havell, with all his pronounced bias for ancient Indian art traditions and his emphatic stress on the unbroken continuity of Indian art traditions, had to admit that the traditional Indian styles were influenced by works of Muslim art in medieval times. Even assuming, therefore, what authorities like Havell and Coomaraswamy have stated about the continuity of Indian art, one cannot deny that the Hindu

craftsman of medieval India was not merely a lender of architectural ideas, but was also a borrower in no small a degree.

#### LENDING AND BORROWING

Medieval Indian architecture was thus built on the principle of give-and-take which in effect amounted to unity in diversity. The earliest mosques in India were patterned on Muslim style, yet the craftsmen who were mostly Hindus adapted local elements of construction and decoration. In the *Qutub Minar* mosque of Delhi, for example, the local craftsmen, unfamiliar with the erection of arches, and ignorant of proper voussoirs, created false arches by means of projecting or horizontal courses of masonry found in temple "Shikharas", and studded the arcaded screen with carved decoration common to local buildings. The Qutub Minar which is Muslim in character was built by Hindu workmen under Muslim supervision in a manner which bears testimony to the admixture of Hindu features. The Alai Darwaza built by Alauddin, which shows the climax of early thirteenth century Indo-Muslim art, is Muslim in its general appearance yet in its decorative details there is much that indicates Hindu taste and Hindu tradition. In other words, from the beginning of Muslim rule in India, many Hindu motifs like lotus, bell and chain, and structural details like lintels and brackets crept into Muslim buildings.

Even though Muslim puritanism was much in evidence during the Tughluq period, the architecture both in Delhi and the provincial centres like Jaunpur once again evinced the process of assimilation from the fifteenth century onwards. The architecture of Gujarat, or Jaunpur, or Bengal bears witness to a grand fusion of local and foreign ideas and techniques. The tendency reached its highwater mark in the Mughal period when Indian and Persian elements mingled to produce a new and harmonious style of architecture. Hindu style based on the principle of horizontal or trabeate construction and characterized by a profusion of decorative detail coalesced with the Muslim accent on the arch and the dome and with Muslim insistence on grace and harmony, no less than symmetry and artistry of pietra dura inlay, geometrical patterning in reliefs,

## *Medieval Indian Architecture*

enamelled, tiled and carved inscriptions. Where the synthesis was a real success, there could be wonders of art like the Taj Mahal which makes the consummation of a truly national style.

### MUGHAL BUILDINGS

Indeed, the Taj is a gem of architecture of which there is no parallel in other Muslim lands. It is in fact neither purely Hindu, nor purely Muslim. It is the finest illustration of the Hindu-Muslim co-partnership in Indian architecture. The design of the Taj is so Indian that it may be regarded as an important link in the long chain of India's artistic traditions from ancient times. Its Indian features are clear, and these show that the Muslim craftsmen did not break or disrupt the continuity of Indian traditions. The juxtaposition of five domes is the Hindu *Pancharatna* symbolism for the five elements. Even the bulbous dome which is the prettiest feature of the Taj is, according to Havell, ultimately traceable to the old Hindu-Buddhist canon based on the lotus and the water pot—symbols of creation and the creative element. The dome of the Taj is clearly unlike Arab, Persian or Turkish domes. The apotheosis of womanhood which the Taj symbolizes was inspired by Hindu idealism, for anthropomorphic idealization is not sanctioned in Islamic art. The characteristic Indianness of the Taj is the result of co-operation between Hindu and Muslim master-builders and workmen. If there were Muslims like Ustad Ahmad, Bebadal Khan, Amanat Khan and others, there were Hindu workers like Chirangi Lal, Chhotey Lal, Mannu Lal, Manohar Singh and others who all received equally high salaries.

Mughal monuments at Fatehpur-Sikri, Agra and Delhi are veritable masterpieces of design, construction and decoration, which are all of a style which may be called Indian, for it is neither Hindu nor Muslim completely. In the monuments of these centres there is a communion of Hindu, Buddhist, Jain and Persian features and ideas. For instance, the insertion of Jaina serpentine brackets in Shaikh Chishti's tomb is a remarkable piece of a blending of dissimilar styles. The Panch Mahal at Sikri or Akbar's tomb at Sikandra likewise suggests a Buddhist monastery or *Vihara*. The lotus-pillared Diwan-i-Khas at Sikri is another supreme

example of a brilliant Hindu symbolism in a Persianized setting—a triumph of Hindu-Muslim co-partnership. In short, there is a fundamental Indianness in all the thirteen so-called Indo-Saracenic styles enumerated by Fergusson, although it might not be visible always to the same extent everywhere.

#### HINDU MOTIFS

How Hindu art motifs were adopted by the Muslim builders is a matter which is as interesting as it is significant. The lotus which is typically Indian was freely inserted in Muslim buildings as a decorative motif in both religious and secular buildings. The lotus design is found in mosques as freely as it is used in royal citadels and palaces. The *Mahapadma* on the dome of the Taj reminds one of an ancient and popular symbolism of the Hindus. The *Amalaka* or the *Kalasha* would also remind one of Hindu influence on Muslim architecture. Bell and chain are other familiar Hindu motifs which were freely used in medieval buildings.

The Muslims also borrowed many structural features from Hindu tradition. Lintels and bracket-capitals are notable instances. Projecting windows, window openings and door-ways, no less than heavy dripstones and plinths and mouldings are also Hindu features to be found in Muslim buildings. The use of carving and sculpture was also inspired by Hindu convention. Thus, even where the general outlook and even ornaments in Muslim buildings are Persian, the Hindu tradition may still be noticed in many features. For example, the combination of a Persianized dome with the Hindu kiosk is at once a reminder of a beautiful synthesis of two distinct streams of art traditions. The same may be said about the juxtaposition of the Muslim arch and the Hindu pillar, or of the Muslim minaret and the Hindu projecting balcony. In short, every important Muslim monument shows that there was no fundamental antagonism between Hindu and Muslim styles and that the two could be fused and transformed into a unique blend.

The intermingling of modes and features was not one-sided, for it was as much to be seen in Hindu buildings as in contemporary Muslim monuments. Examples of pure

or unalloyed Hindu style are to be found mainly in the Deccan, for in the south alone the continuity of Hindu traditions remained intact on account of the comparatively lesser degree of Muslim dominance. But, the contrast between the temples of the north and those of the south is so apparent that it attracts the notice even of the superficial observer. The emphasis on lines and angles which marks the Deccan temples is conspicuous by its absence in the northern temples. The latter exemplify a suitable adaptation of the Muslim arch and the circle. Even though domes are not very common, the turrets and kiosks are dissimilar from those of the south. Those who have not seen the South Indian monuments cannot feel the transparent likeness between the northern temples and mosques. The exuberance of sculptural ornamentation which is the most distinctive feature of Deccan style is not to be found in the north.

#### MUSLIM INFLUENCE

The moderation and restraint one notices in the North Indian temples in so far as decorative patterning is concerned is clearly traceable to Muslim influence. The Hindu buildings of the north are also characterized by the Muslim accent on harmony of lines and balanced massing. Unlike the temples of the south, the temples of the north reflect constructional unity more than the richness of the ornamentation. This is also due to Muslim influence. The Hindu palaces of Rajputana or Central India are Hindu in structural design, but they show a considerable influence of Muslim taste in execution and also in decoration.

Again, the typical temple of the north is crowned by a curvilinear tower or *Shikhara*, whereas the southern temples have a pyramidal tower with stepped sides, in addition to towering gateways called *Gopurams*. This difference is also likewise due to Muslim influence. That the Hindu craftsman did not hesitate to assimilate Muslim traditions even in the construction of temples indicates the degree and variety of the inter-borrowing of ideas and tastes.

With the advent of the puritan Emperor Aurangzeb Mughal art rapidly declined, and before long disappeared as a distinct entity. The craftsman of the Indo-Muslim

school took refuge in Hindu states of Rajputana and Central India where they kept up the old traditions. That the real greatness of Mughal architecture was a result of the co-operation between Hindu and Muslim genius is thus negatively proved by the sudden deterioration that came in the reign of Aurangzeb himself. The tombs and mosques of his time show a distinct falling off of standard and taste which resulted from the sudden snapping of the ties of co-partnership between Hindu and Muslim artists and builders. The historic communion of ideas came to an end when Aurangzeb drove out all but Muslim craftsmen, and banned the Hindu traditions of art. In other words, the decline of medieval Indian architecture started only when the links of inter-communal co-operation in art were suddenly snapped.

The characteristic greatness of the architecture of medieval India may thus be justly ascribed to the fusion of ideas, which arose in the course of centuries of Muslim rule. Architecture symbolized a concrete objectification of the urge to unity and synthesis which formed the peculiar key-note of India's composite culture.



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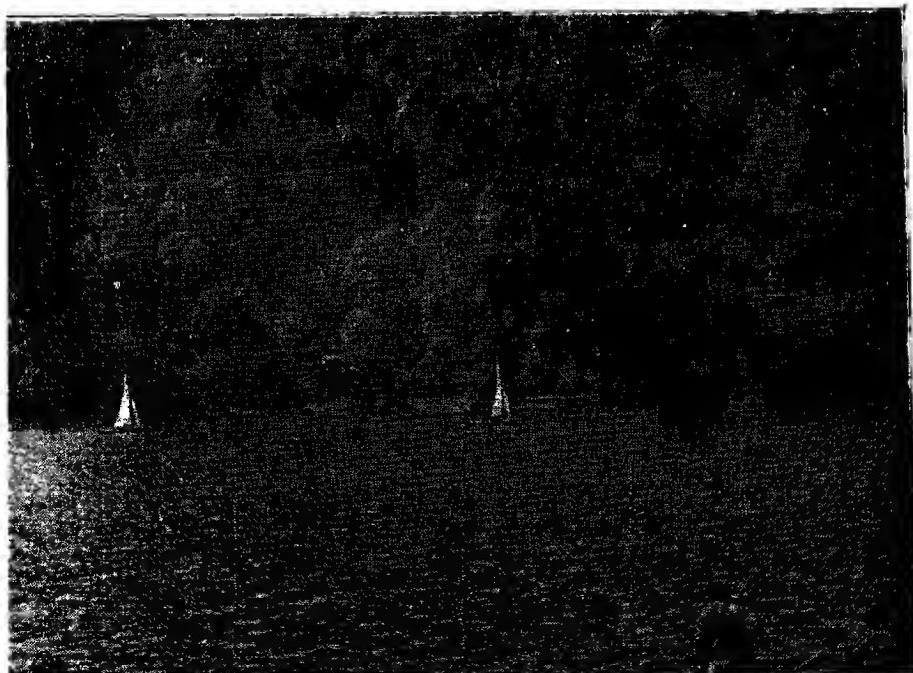
*A suburb of Ranikhet with a distant view of the snow-capped Himalayan range.*

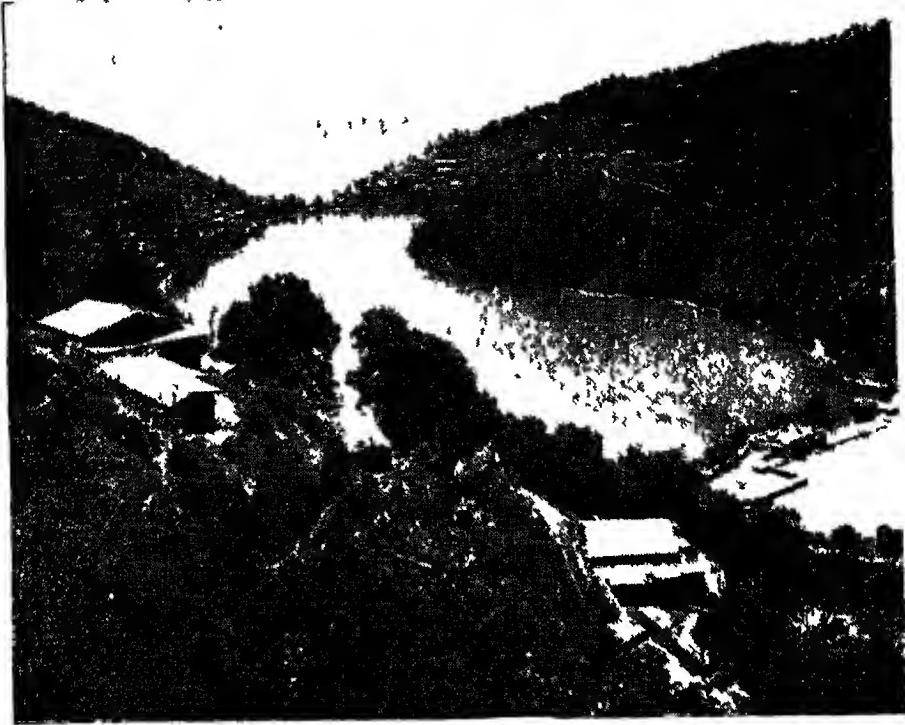


*Another view of the snow-capped Himalayan range.*



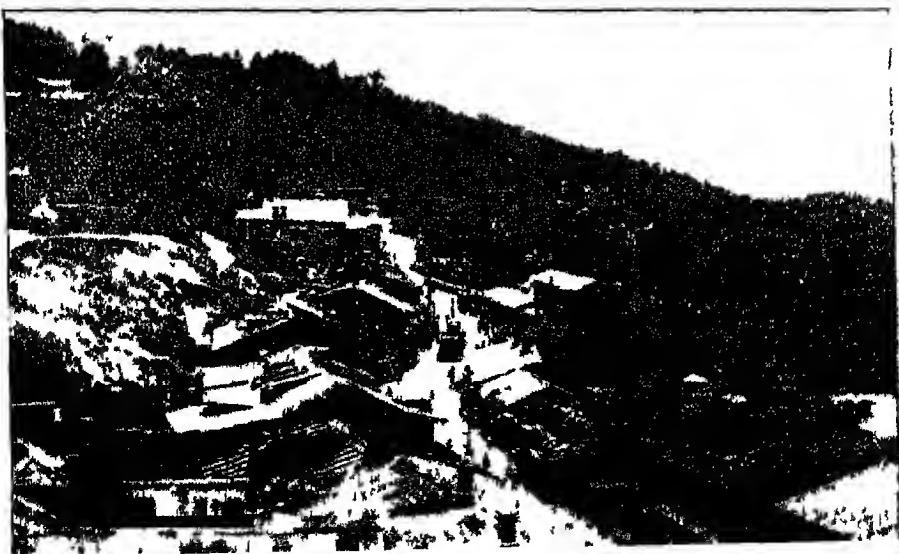
*A view of Naini Tal lake*

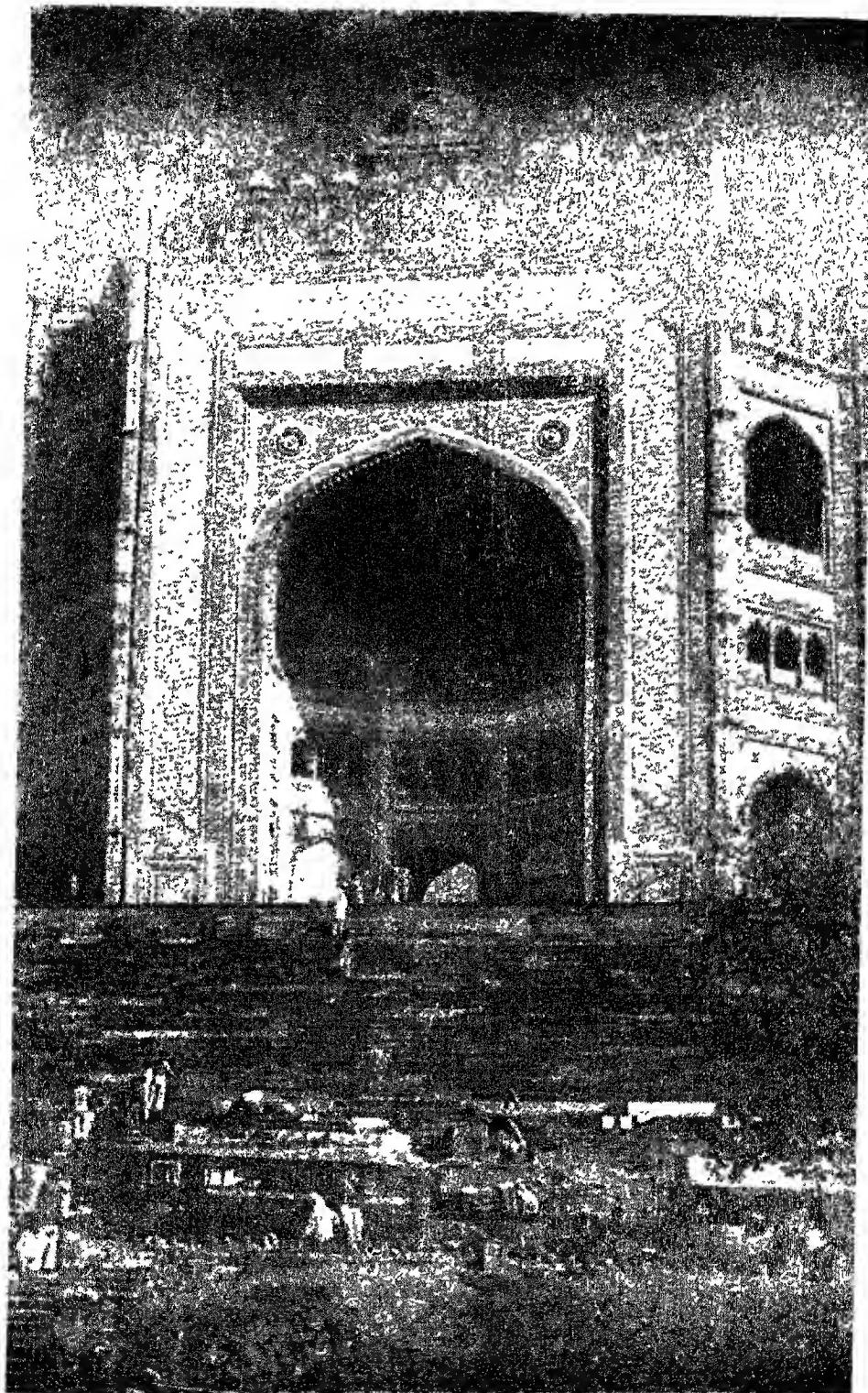




*A view of Naini Tal*

*Ranikhet*





*Baland Darwaza, Fatehpur Sikri*

## MUGHAL ARCHITECTURE

Mughal architecture marks an important stage in the evolution of Indian art and culture, and in many respects it is more interesting than the monuments of the pre-Mughal Muslim dynasties of Hindustan, or the Deccan. The masterpieces of the Mughal period are grander and more elegant, and there is a certain unity as well as perfection in them, which are lacking in the architecture of the preceding centuries. The architecture of the Mughals marks also the final phase in the growth of an Indo-Islamic style that first appeared under the early Turkish rulers ; as such, it may be regarded as the culmination of the remarkable fusion of two dissimilar civilizations and cultures—Hinduism and Islam. Mughal buildings bear witness as much to the synthetical power of the Hindu genius as to adaptability of the Muslim spirit.

Babur alone, among the great Mughals, has left no impress of his personality on India's architecture, although we learn from his own memoirs that he was a keen builder. The reasons why he did very little building in India are easy to understand. His rule was too short, and he was busy fighting all through. Besides, India did not appeal to him. He was in fact dissuaded by the uninviting character of the country from establishing his permanent headquarters here, and he always pined for Kabul and Samarkand. The home-sick Emperor writes, "We were annoyed by three things in Hindustan—one was its heat, another the strong wind, and third its dust". Babur had also a poor opinion about Indians, and he disdained to commission the local builders to construct his buildings. He writes, although unjustly, "They have no skill, or knowledge in design, or architecture".

Whatever Babur had built was really in a foreign style, and did not form a continuation of the traditions of the local style. Being a keen builder he built several palaces, baths,

tanks, gardens, but they have all perished. Two well-known mosques built by him yet remain—one at Ayodhya in the district of Faizabad and the other at Sambhal in Rohilkhand. The traces of his city can be seen at Agra on the other bank of the Yamuna opposite to the Taj.

#### HUMAYUN'S TOMB

Humayun's reign was also fitful and troubled, and he too could not build much. His tomb at Delhi which still happily stands entire, must have been begun by him, and was completed in Akbar's time. This tomb bears the impress of a Persian taste throughout in arches, domes and decorations. It is in fact more Persian than any monument in India, and has been called a Persianized version of Sher Shah's tomb. Except probably the symbolism of the *Pancharatna* domes, there is no Hindu influence prominent in this building, even the traditional lotus on the dome is absent. The *Kalasha* is of the Saracenic type. All this was evidently due to the presence of the Persian craftsmen and courtiers who came to India with Humayun after his Persian exile.

As a work of art, Humayun's tomb is an important link in the evolution of the Taj. In this can be seen the beginning of that stone inlay which reached its perfection in the Taj, and its four corner cupolas and the narrow-necked dome and the general design were all later on adopted in the Taj. There is a certain coldness in its design which lacks the artistry of the plan of the Taj, and its Persianness, though to a certain degree modified by the five domes, the use of marble, and the absence of tile decoration has given it an unmistakably alien character.

The real Mughal style began in Akbar's time which has been aptly termed the epic age of Mughal architecture because of its grandeur, originality, and vigour. Studied as a part of the Indo-Muslim architecture of Hindustan, Akbar's buildings are related to those of Sher Shah whose architecture was essentially Indian in conception. Historically, Akbar took up where Sher Shah had left both in administration and architecture. What had been begun by the Pathan empire-builder was worthily continued and developed by his Mughal successor, hence there is very little generic difference between

## *Mughal Architecture*

Akbar's buildings and those of Sher Shah, except in the more outspoken Indianness of the former.

### AKBAR'S BUILDINGS

One need not suppose that Akbar played the role of an architect, yet it is known that he personally controlled his Public Works Department and supervised the minutest details of expense. His direct influence on the style of his architecture may have been very little, but his indirect influence was undeniable. The spirit of tolerance, and a predilection for Hindu ideas that marked the character of Akbar are fully traceable in his buildings. Akbar, as Havell rightly puts it, was an Indian of Indians. This is why his architecture was really Indian, rather than foreign.

Akbar's buildings mark a re-action against the Persianization of Muslim style in India, and barring the slight Persian influence visible in certain details of surface decoration, his style is Hindu both in structure and design. Besides, there is a certain virile imagination and boldness that may be felt in Akbar's buildings, and this vigour is worthy of an epic type and befits a warrior and empire-builder. Again, the distinctive feature of Akbar's architecture is the happy blending of art and economy. Art has not been sacrificed in the interests of economy, yet it is not extravagant. There is a marked contrast between the dignified sandstone buildings of Akbar, and the luxurious and pretty marble palaces of Shahjahan. In short, the same economy, efficiency, and liberality which distinguished Akbar's administration are visible in his buildings as well. The vigorous style of Akbar was not plain, formal or sombre like that of the Tughluqs, but shows Hindu imagination and artistry, and is also distinct from the effeminate and poetic style that flourished under Shahjahan. The robust, virile, yet imaginative style of Akbar's buildings is clearly differentiated from what preceded it, and what followed afterwards.

The best examples of Akbar's style are noticed at Sikri. The monuments at Sikri are artistically a romance in stone—a truer reflex of the mind as well as the life of the great Emperor than the chronicles of his time. Sikri is neither a

freak of an irresponsible despot, nor the petrification of his passing mood. Akbar's tolerance, organizing genius, greatness as an administrator, artistic tastes, manly vigour, religious turn of mind, sobriety, and dignified ambition are too clearly imprinted on the architectural monuments of Sikri to be mistaken.

#### JAHANGIR'S PERIOD

None among the Mughal Emperors built less, or cared less for architecture than Jahangir. It was partly due to his innate indolence, and to some extent to his mediocrity, and also to his political troubles. Still his period marks a transition between the predominantly Hindu style of Akbar, and the markedly Persian style of Shahjahan, and as such it partakes of the characteristics of both the styles—the Vihara-like tomb of Akbar at Sikandra on the one hand, and the tomb of Itmad-ud-Daulah, which shows Persian taste on the other, illustrate the gradual change in style.

Jahangir's period is architecturally interesting in several other respects. We note the first use of the inlay work in Jahangir's time. Up to Akbar there had been no inlay work but only mosaic work with coloured marble. According to some critics, the influence of Italian artists is visible in the inlay work of this and of the later periods, but the inlay work in Jahangir and Shahjahan's buildings is Persian and not Italian, the motifs being Persian, e.g. wine-cups, rose-water vessels, flowers, vases, cypress, fruits, etc. But what is more important, Jahangir commenced that extravagance which reached its climax in the costly works of Shahjahan. Akbar's dignified and economical style was abandoned finally. Besides, there is a clear indication of effeminate style and taste in Jahangir's buildings due surely to the influence of Nur Jahan. The elegant Samman Burj in the Agra fort, or the bejewelled Itmad-ud-Daulah in the suburbs of Agra shows the beginning of that "picture architecture" which is seen at its best in Shahjahan's time. Furthermore, the influence of Bijapur architecture on the Mughal buildings is traceable from now on. For example, the stunted minarets of the Itmad-ud-Daulah are an imitation of Ibrahim's Rauza at Bijapur.

## *Mughal Architecture*

### SHAHJAHAN AND AKBAR

Shahjahan's period witnessed an exuberance of architectural activities, which is unprecedented in the history of medieval India. His buildings mark the climax of the Indo-Islamic style, and form the lyric age of Mughal architecture. His palaces and mosques at Delhi and Agra, and above all the Taj, the *chef-d'oeuvre* of his reign, are veritable architectural triumphs of his passion for beauty wrought into living stone.

Between Akbar's buildings, and those of Shahjahan there is an extraordinary contrast. Akbar's buildings exhibit a robust, imaginative, and manly vigour, whereas Shahjahan's monuments are distinguished by an extreme elegance and ornate beauty bordering on refined sensuousness and effeminacy. While Akbar's buildings leave the impression of an ambitious warrior and statesman, those of Shahjahan betray its builder as a soft and refined sensualist fond of feminine charm and grace. Akbar had been studiously economical, but Shahjahan was recklessly extravagant at the expense of the sweated millions of India. His marble edifices richly decorated with precious and semi-precious stones are truly dazzling. But, the principal change that came over Mughal architecture under Shahjahan is the predominance of Persian taste. The Hindu character of Akbar's style was almost lost in the Persian features that were introduced under Shahjahan. This Persianized style of Shahjahan at once suggests the end of the tolerant and pro-Hindu policy of Akbar. The Muslim arch, geometrical traceries and Persian mosaic and inlay work serve to indicate the denationalization of style, that Akbar had stopped, and form a parallel to the commencement of religious persecution in Shahjahan's time. Even a casual visitor cannot fail to see the latter's narrow orthodoxy, extreme prodigality, effeminate tastes, abnormal egoism, excessive refinement, and sensual character in his buildings.

### AN ANALYSIS

Apart from the styles, the concrete features of design and decoration in Akbar's buildings also differ from those in Shahjahan's monuments. The difference can be easily understood from the following analysis :

Firstly, Akbar's buildings are almost all built of red

sandstone. Those of Shahjahan are mostly of marble of the finest quality.

Secondly, the construction of Akbar's buildings is on the Hindu corbel principle, i.e. the Hindu system of horizontal courses and brackets is followed in preference to the true radiating arches.

Thirdly, in Akbar's buildings animal forms are not avoided and are introduced as a decorative feature. In Shahjahan's time they are not so common, and are shunned in accordance with the principles of Islam.

Fourthly, in the fresco painting at Sikri even human beings are to be noticed. In Shahjahan's time only geometrical or floral designs are seen in the inlay or *pietra-dura* work. The picture of Orpheus is a solitary example of a human figure in a decoration of Shahjahan's time.

Fifthly, in Akbar's buildings enamelled tiles are freely used, and there is incised plaster work also. In Shahjahan's time, tiling or plaster work gives place to stone traceries in marble, both white and coloured.

Sixthly, the design of Akbar's architecture is clearly Rajput. Shahjahan's buildings show diverse influences such as those of Bengal (Gaur), and Bijapur. The bent roofs and cornices are Bengali and domes, minarets, and the trellis work, etc., are after the Bijapur fashion.

Seventhly, the emphasis in Akbar's time was on the structural design. In Shahjahan's time, the concentration is on decoration. The "picture architecture" of Shahjahan was probably inspired by the Court painters and calligraphists.

Lastly, there is little inlay work in Akbar's buildings and the mosaics of this period are of marble. In Shahjahan's architecture *pietra-dura* inlay work after the Persian fashion predominates.

#### PERSONALITY JUDGED

Just as Akbar's mind and genius can be studied at Sikri, Shahjahan's personality and taste can be judged from his

### *Mughal Architecture*

buildings at Agra. A generalization made on the basis of architectural style about the personal character of the builder can never be as accurate as the testimony of contemporary writers can be and in the absence of other corroborative evidence a statement based on a comparison of buildings alone may be misleading, or even distinctly unjust. But when the character and style of the buildings corroborate our information about the builder's personality from literary sources, there remains no doubt about their significance. Such is the case with the creations of Akbar and Shahjahan. These form a reflex of their mind and character.

As Akbar's tolerance, organizing genius, greatness as an administrator, artistic taste, manly vigour, religious turn of mind, love of economy and dignified ambition are all to be felt in his buildings, so can Shahjahan's orthodoxy, reckless prodigality, effeminate taste, abnormal egoism, inordinate refinement, and sensual character be seen in his monuments at Agra and Delhi.

It would, however, be wrong to believe with the older school of archaeologists like Fergusson, or Burgess that there is no trace of Hindu influence at all in Shahjahan's buildings. Even the Taj which is the masterpiece of Shahjahan's style bears witness to Hindu influence. Its style is in keeping with Indian traditions, and is Indian in body and in soul.

#### DETERIORATION

After Shahjahan, architecture suddenly deteriorated under Aurangzeb. There was an abrupt break in the Mughal building tradition. The reasons for the decline of Mughal architecture are not far to seek. Firstly, the bigoted Emperor, Aurangzeb, did not allow Hindu genius to enrich Mughal architecture, and dismissed all but the orthodox Muslim craftsman. The combination of Hindu and Muslim master-builders, which was responsible for the greatness of the Mughal style, was no more. Secondly, Aurangzeb had no taste for the fine arts, and lacked the artistic sense of his predecessors. Thirdly, the Emperor disdained extravagance and built only mosques and those too mostly with the materials of Hindu temples demolished under his orders. Fourthly, constant political turmoils and wars kept the Emperor

preoccupied. Fifthly, owing to his orthodox religious views, Aurangzeb was against all sorts of ornamental architecture, or decoration. Lastly, his neglect and indifference drove the craftsmen to the small Hindu States of Rajputana and Central India such as Jaipur, Deeg, Orchha, Datia, etc. and led to a degeneration of taste in Muslim buildings.

The story of Mughal architecture is not without its inner significance. The perfection of the Mughal style was due to the co-operation of the Hindu and the Muslim genius, and its decline resulted from the bigoted attempt of Aurangzeb to do without the Hindu master-builders. The achievements of a nation-builder like Akbar were nullified by the blind orthodoxy of the last of the great Mughals as much in the political sphere as in the domain of art with disastrous results for the Mughal culture and civilization.

## ITALIAN INFLUENCE ON MUGHAL ARCHITECTURE

The origin of the *pietra-dura* inlay work in Mughal architecture has been a subject of controversy for a long time past, and historians of medieval Indian architecture have advanced conflicting opinions based on a variety of data, historical as well as conjectural. A student of India's architectural history is not yet in a position to arrive at a decisive opinion, because conclusive contemporary evidence is still wanting to prove or disprove any hypothesis. There is, however, a sufficient amount of indirect evidence which has to be sifted critically before one can hazard any opinions on the subject.

It is a great pity that the authorities have not been actuated by a dispassionate regard for the actual truth. The critics have assumed the roles of advocates, and have shown a tendency either to prove somehow by ingenuously twisting the evidence of the Italian origin of Indian *pietra-dura*. What is needed is an impartial and scientific analysis of the available sources of information that alone can lead to the establishment of the truth.

Roughly, there are two schools of thought to be noticed in this connexion. One school is represented by writers like Smith, Burgess, Fergusson, Rev. H. Hosten, and others who have sought to ascribe the introduction of the *pietra-dura* to the Italian artists who resided at the Mughal Court. The other school is represented by that liberal connoisseur of Indian art, Havell, who has stoutly opposed the story of European influence on Indian *pietra-dura*. In their enthusiasm for the respective viewpoints, both the sides have assumed much that is historically yet to be proved, and have thus weakened their case thereby in the eyes of a sober student of Indian history. It is, however, necessary to present the main arguments of either side before any critical estimate of their intrinsic value can be attempted.

The main arguments urged by different critics in defence

of the theory of Italian origin of Indian *pietra-dura* must be summarized at the outset before they can be discussed.

Firstly, some of the designs of the inlay to be seen at Agra and Delhi are of the "Renaissance" style of Florence of this period. It is assumed therefore that it was the work of Italian artists from Florence. Vincent Smith writes about the famous screen railing round the cenotaph in the Taj, "It may be taken as an unsurpassed example of the art in Shahjahan's time. The lines of the repeating pattern in this case are more like Italian Renaissance than Asiatic work (*vide History of Art in India and Ceylon*, page 437). Even Sir John Marshall who rejected the story of the Italian designer of the Taj was of the opinion that this pattern betrays Italian influence.

Secondly, the picture of Orpheus playing the violin surrounded by animals and birds cannot but be Italian, and it demonstrates that Italian workmen were employed to reproduce a unique picture of the immortal Italian painter, Raphael. The fact that the aforesaid panel depicts an unmistakably Greek and Roman legend of Orpheus is cited as one of the strongest proofs of Italian influence on Indian architecture of those days. Even Sir Syed Ahmad Khan admitted this in his *Asarus-Sanadid*, "as the tableau was known only in Europe, it may be concluded with certainty that Europeans, come from Italy, were among the workmen employed on the construction of Shahjahan's castle" (*vide M. Garcin de Tassy : Description des monuments de Delhi*, Pt. I, Ch. XIX). It may be added here that the same author writing about the mosaics at the palace baths goes on to say, "These mosaics prove that a clever Italian was among the artists employed for these constructions".

Thirdly, the Etruscan vases executed in several places in the Taj and elsewhere corroborate the tradition that the designers of the inlay were Italians.

Fourthly, it is definitely known that there were numerous Italian artists and craftsmen at Agra and Delhi during the Mughal times, and that they were in the service of the Emperors. It stands to reason, therefore, that they must have taught the designs and technique of the Florentine art of inlay to the Indian workmen.

Fifthly, the Rev. E. Terry, who resided at Jahangir's court for about three years with Sir Thomas Roe says, "The Jesuit congregations there are very thin, consisting of some Italians, which the Mughal entertains, by great pay given to them, to cut his diamonds and other rich stones . . ." (*vide* Terry; *A Voyage to East Indies*). It is argued from this that the Italian cutters of precious stones must evidently also have been the inlayers of *pietra-dura*.

Sixthly, Manucci also states that there were at the Mughal court large numbers of European lapidaries, enamellers, goldsmith, surgeons and gunners (*vide* Manucci: *Storia de Mogor*). The Rev. H. Hosten has argued that under the general designation of "enamellers" Italian *pietra-dura* inlayers are included. According to him, the Portuguese word esmalter means to enamel, to inlay, to variegate with colours.

Seventhly, the Rev. H. Hosten has found many allusions to the presence of Italians in Mughal India in the unpublished Jesuit letters (*vide* the *Annual Report of the Jesuits for 1597*, J. A. S. B. 1896, pp. 88, 91, 92, 95, *Purchas His Pilgrimes*, IV, p. 174, etc.). He opines that the advent of the Italian diamond cutters and enamellers coincides with the period when the *pietra-dura* art flourished in India, and this supports the theory of Italian influence.

Eighthly, Father Catrou has referred to the grandest example of *pietra-dura* inlay at Delhi, which no longer exists. From his description, it appears to have been a vine formed of precious stones of the largest size, the leaves being made of emeralds and the grapes hanging in clusters being composed of costly diamonds and rubies (*vide* Catrou: *The General History of the Mogol Empire*, pp. 227-228). Catrou's story has been corroborated by Gentil (*vide* his *Memoirs*, pp. 173-174). The Rev. H. Hosten has suggested that the Anguri Baghs were an Italian idea and says, "Who would not be tempted to connect Shahjahan's vine in *pietra-dura* at Delhi, and similar ones at Agra and Lahore with the grapes of sunny Italy . . .?" (*vide* J. U. P. H. S. III p. 157). It is assumed that Italian gardeners and inlayers alone could efficiently design the inlay of the vine-leaves and grapes in Agra, Delhi and Lahore. Catrou is again cited to show that the Delhi gardens were laid out by a Venetian.

Ninthly, it is urged that if *pietra-dura* had been really indigenous to India, some treatises on it must have existed. The absence of the latter supports the belief of the foreign origin of the art.

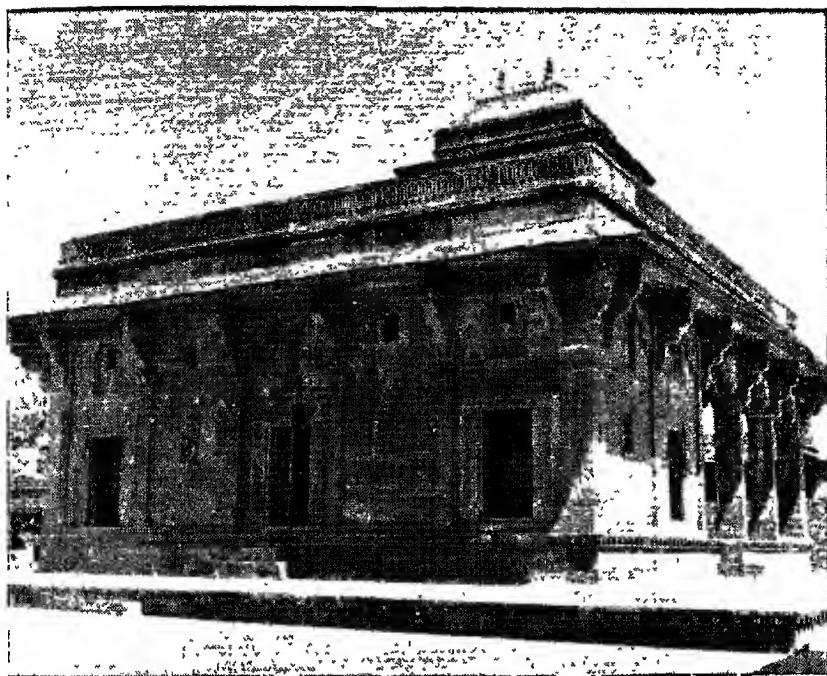
Tenthly, without admitting Italian influence, it is impossible to account for the sudden appearance of this art in its perfection in India of that age. It is argued that an art like this could not spring into prominence all of a sudden and be perfect from the very start.

Eleventhly, Bernier says about the Taj (*vide his Travels*, p. 298) that Shahjahan wanted to rival the work of Florence. Tavernier (*vide his Travels I.* 98-99) also mention about the Diwan-i-Khas in the Delhi palace that Shahjahan intended the mosaic work therein to be as rich and ornamental as in the Chapel of the Grand Duke in Italy. The Rev. H. Hosten argues from these statements, "If, as we might understand Bernier and Tavernier, Shahjahan wished to rival the lavish use of *pietra-dura* in the Medicean Chapel, who was to imitate it but those who had seen it and could imitate it ?

Twelfthly, a modern Italian writer, Antonio Zobi, whose account has been accepted by the Rev. H. Hosten, states that Grand Duke Ferdinand I after starting the construction of the Medicean Chapel had sent four of his workmen to India in quest of precious stones. The Medicean Archives show that Ferdinand I had to address himself to the ruler of Spain for the necessary passport to be given to the workmen. No details as regards these men are, however, available, but it was suggested by Signor Zobi that these workmen might have been persuaded to stay in India, and that they might have explained their art to the Indians.

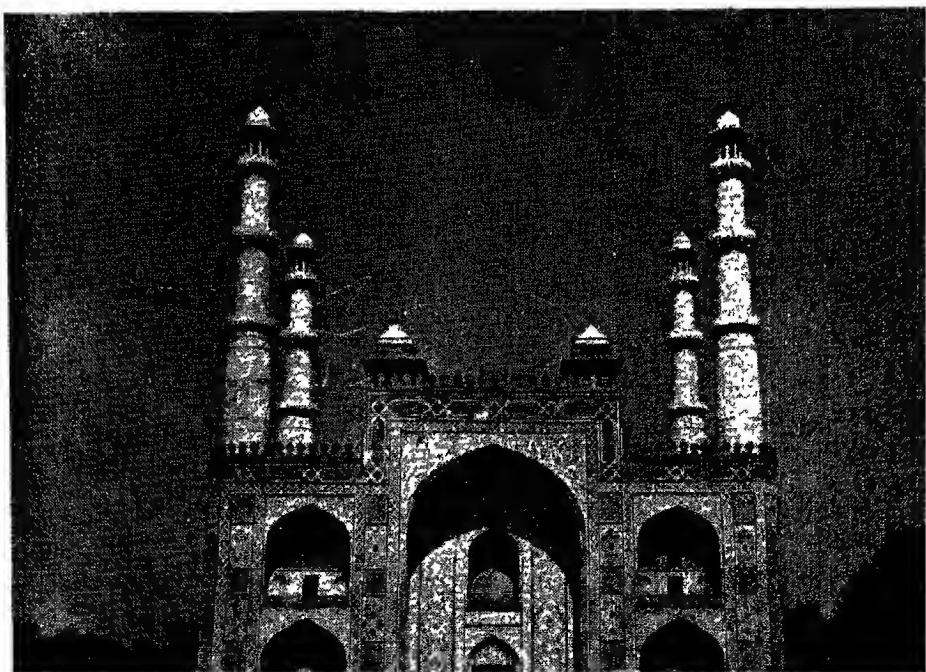
Lastly, it is to be noted that a modern Florentine inlayer, A. Menegatti, who had been commissioned by Lord Curzon to replace the picture of Orpheus at Delhi, was of the opinion that the work of the Taj, Delhi, and Florence was one and the same.

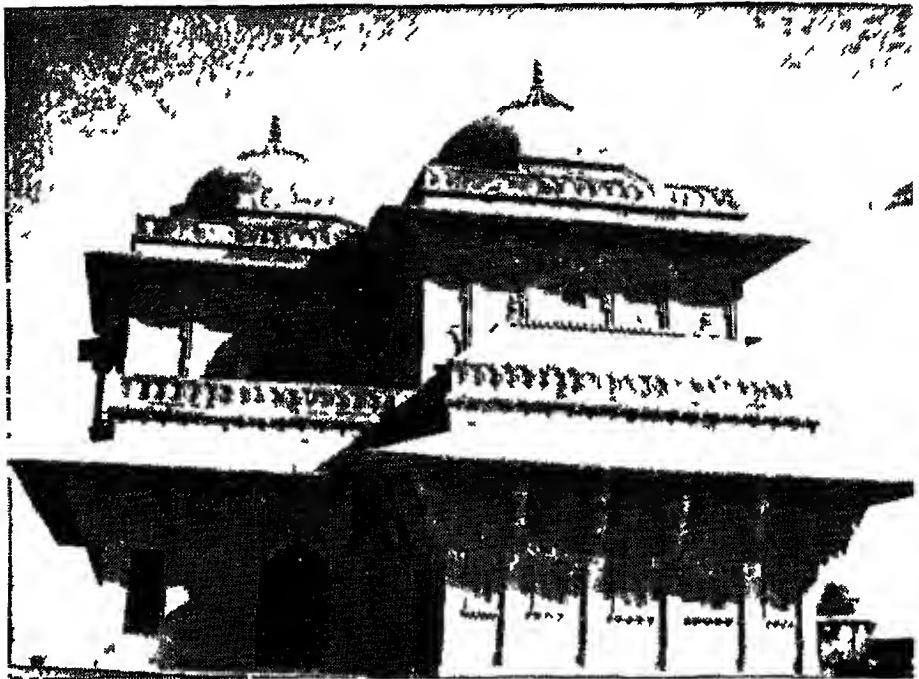
From the formidable array of arguments summarized above from different sources, it might appear that a very strong case has been made out in favour of the view that the



*Sunahra Makan, Fatehpur Sikri*

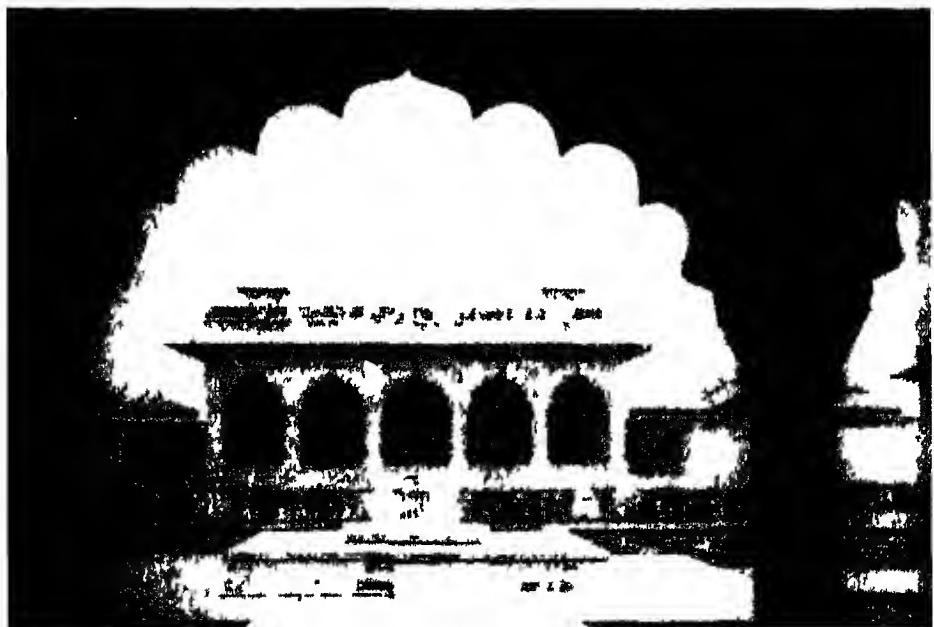
*Gateway, Sikandara*





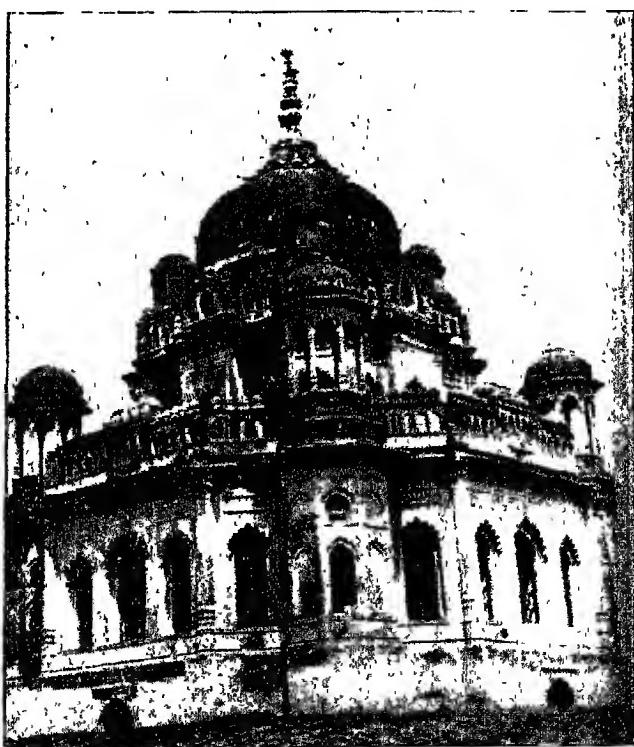
*Bubal's Palace, Lahore, Sikhs*

*Front view of Diwan e Khas*



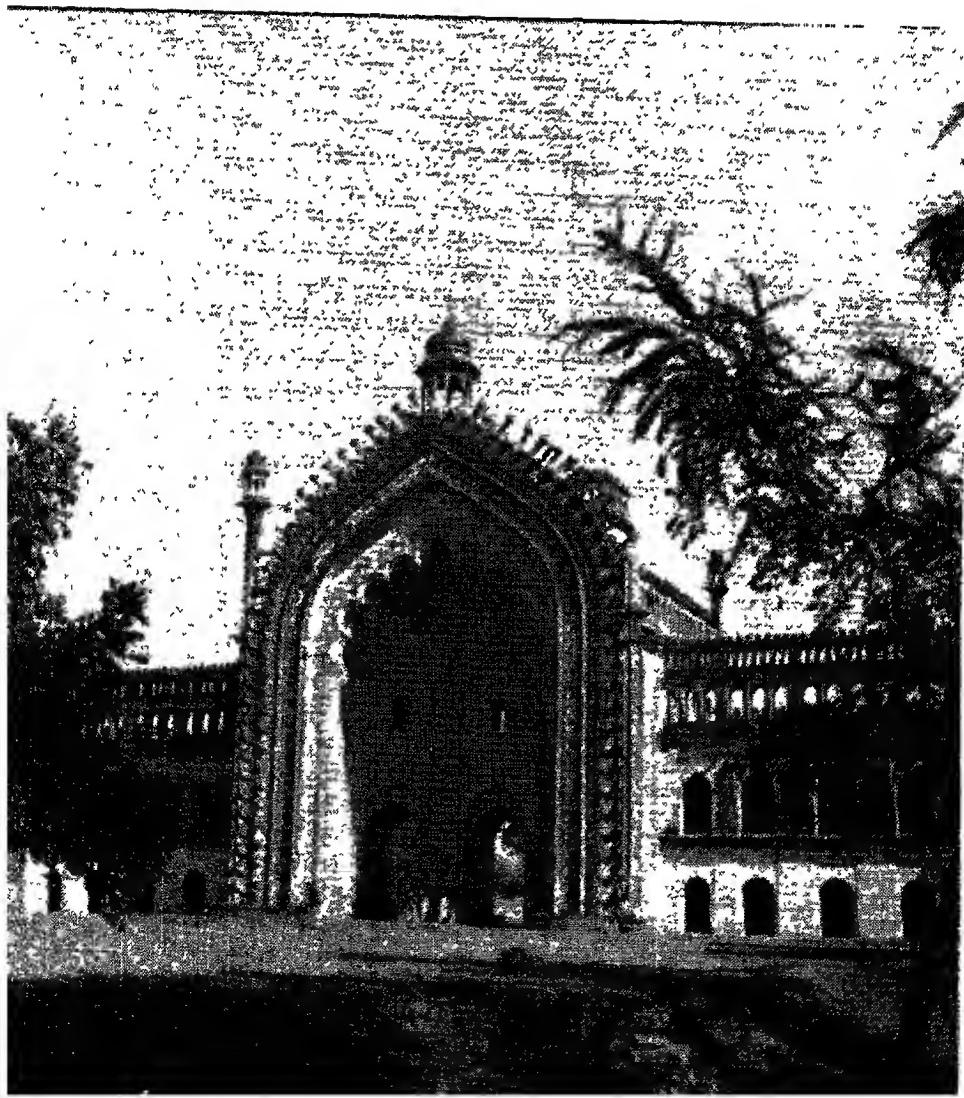


*The Residency, Lucknow*



*Nawab Saadat Ali Khan's Mausoleum, Lucknow*

*Rumi Darwaza, Lucknow*



### *Italian Influence on Mughal Architecture*

Italians introduced the art of *pietra-dura* in India. But, that the above position is not convincing will be apparent from the arguments advanced against it.

Firstly, from the Indian chronicles it does not appear that foreigners did the inlay work in the Taj or elsewhere. On the other hand, the names of Hindu inlayers, Chiranji Lal, Chhotey Lal, Mannu Lal, Manohar Singh, who are said to have received high salaries are included in the list of workmen engaged in the construction of the Taj.

Secondly, it is wrong to assume that *pietra-dura* had not existed before the Mughals. Havell refers to a fine example of Indian *pietra-dura* in the fifteenth century Jain Temple of Chitor, wherein mosaics of Cornelian and Agate could be found. Sir John Marshall also has mentioned an earlier form at Mandu (*vide Annual Report A. S. India*, 1904-5, p. 5, 1903-4, p. 38). Even another type of *pietra-dura* is to be seen in Rajputana in the Jagmandir palace at Udaipur, built about 1623 for Prince Khurram.

Thirdly, the *pietra-dura* in Mughal architecture is Persian in character, and the idea of Florentine design is far-fetched. The motifs are all Persian—the tree of life, the cypress tree, the flower vases, fruits, wine-cups, rose-water vessels, etc. have all been imitated from either Persian pottery, or Persian mosaic tiles. The naturalistic fresco painting of Persia has only been reproduced in the Taj and in Shahjahan's palaces.

Fourthly, the Indians had nothing new to learn about the technique of inlay from the Italians, as the art had been popularized by the Arab and the Persian styles already.

Lastly, the solitary example of Florentine *pietra-dura* decoration, that is to be seen at the throne-chamber of Delhi, is not a decisive proof of Italian influence. Havell suggests that the panel might have been imported complete from Italy and fixed in the wall by local workmen.

On a dispassionate examination of the conflicting arguments it is difficult to reject summarily the theory of the Italian influence, as it is equally difficult to ignore the strength of the arguments advanced by Havell and others.

Some of the arguments of Smith, Hosten, and others are unassailable. For example, the Florentine *pietra-dura* in the Diwan-i-Am at Delhi could not have been executed by Indian workmen, and the picture of Orpheus, for instance, is peculiarly European. Again, it is undeniable that there were a large number of Italian and other European artists and jewellers in the Mughal court, and they must have had a hand in the artistic work executed at that time.

But, it is equally certain that many of the arguments given above are conjectural at best, or fail to be conclusive. The solitary picture of Orpheus which is nowhere repeated in any form does not by itself prove anything. Havell's opinion that it might have been imported from Europe, or purchased by the Emperor from the Italians as a curio is certainly not unreasonable. Again, the design and symbolism of the inlay at other places is not definitely Italian as is maintained by some critics. They are rather glaringly Persian in style. Besides, in the absence of definite evidence vague allusions to the presence of Europeans in the Mughal court in the diaries of the travellers and the Jesuits do not necessarily prove that the Italians introduced any new art in India. The foreign workmen may have been employed, as is expressly stated, for cutting the precious stones used in the inlay work. The stone-cutters referred to by Terry need not have been inlayers. Any presumption to that effect in the absence of a definite statement is hardly logical.

The fact that no Asiatic treatises on *pietra-dura* have been found does not prove that it could not be an indigenous art. Craftsmanship in the East is generally handed down by oral tradition from father to son. Again, it is strange that no European traveller has definitely stated that the Italians had been engaged to do the *pietra-dura* work in the Taj or elsewhere. Why should they not have mentioned it, if it had been a fact ?

Signor Zobi's theory that four Italian workmen sent by Ferdinand I taught the art to the Indians has not been proved, and is no more than a conjecture. No clear documentary evidence has been produced in defence of this assertion. Signor Menegatti's opinion may have been promoted by a patriotic desire to boast the art of his country.

### *Italian Influence on Mughal Architecture*

The *pietra-dura* work undertaken in Shahjahan's time was on such a large scale that it is difficult to believe that a handful of Italians could have designed or supervised the whole of it.

The design of the vine and grapes has again been wrongly assumed to have been borrowed from Italy. Persia too was a land of grapes, and was much nearer to India. Besides, Persian designs or tastes were fashionable in the Mughal times. The designs as adopted in India were Persian.

The arguments of Havell, based as they are on historical as well as artistic grounds, are more telling. But, he has not adduced sufficient evidence to show how that art had gradually evolved in India before the arrival of the Europeans. The solitary instances from Chitor and Mandu are not conclusive, as they are not real *pietra-dura*. The inlay work at Mandu is only marble mosaic. It has, therefore, yet to be shown how the technique had been mastered in India, or whether it was imported wholesale from Persia.

Again, there is at least some similarity in the technique of Indian *pietra-dura* and that of Florence. Is this merely a coincidence ? Shahjahan had cosmopolitan tastes as is evident from the employment of European artists and jewelers, and it is not unlikely that the latter might have supplied some models and designs. Ideas were not shunned in those days simply on the ground that they had been imported from Europe. It may be pointed out that even Havell has conceded (*vide his Handbook to Agra and the Taj*, p. 89), "It is quite possible that some Italians may have shown the native inlayers specimens of Florentine *pietra-dura*, and suggested to them this naturalistic treatment . . ."

From the existing evidence, it is impossible to hazard a dogmatic opinion, and all that can be said is that until an authoritative and genuine contemporary statement is produced, the theory of the Italian origin of Indian *pietra-dura* must remain open to doubt.

## LUCKNOW ARCHITECTURE

The title of Lucknow to be termed the "City of Gardens and Palaces" rests upon a comparatively brief and modern pedigree, for its architectural glories date only from the latter half of the eighteenth to the first half of the nineteenth centuries. But, there are few cities in India where there is a more spectacular and purposeful manifestation of architecture, both religious and secular, all produced in the brief space of not even a full century comprising the period of Nawabs of Avadh. When Asaf-ud-Daulah shifted his capital from Faizabad in 1775, Lucknow was scarcely better than a prosperous village. That in the course of a few generations Lucknow could become a magnificent city was a splendid achievement on the part of the local Nawabs who were indefatigable builders. Under their patronage, Lucknow became the nerve centre of a cultural efflorescence which marks an important stage in Modern India's artistic development.

### MEMORABLE STYLE

The architectural style which grew up at Lucknow is memorable in many ways, and is illustrative of an intensive regional growth following the collapse of the Empire of Delhi. It is a pity that the Lucknow style has not received the attention it deserves. The historians of Indian architecture have roundly dismissed the monuments of Lucknow as specimens of a decadent and hybrid style. A generalization such as this is both hasty and uncritical. It will be readily conceded that the buildings of the Lucknow Nawabs cannot stand comparison with the masterpieces of the Mughal capitals. It was no fault of the Lucknow Nawabs that they could not emulate the architectural achievements of the Great Mughals. Let the Lucknow style be judged on its own merits, and not by way of a comparison with a decidedly grander style, for comparison between a full-blooded imperial school of architecture and a mere provincial or regional style is bound to be misleading and unfair.

The Nawabs of Avadh could claim with justice that it was they who had kept the lamp of Indo-Muslim architecture burning in Hindustan despite adverse circumstances and mighty odds. But for their liberal patronage and personal enthusiasm, the end of Mughal architecture would have been complete in Northern India during the period of political turmoil that came in the wake of Aurangzeb's death. After the fall of the Mughal Empire, the seat of Indo-Muslim culture shifted from Delhi to Faizabad, and thence to Lucknow, and this was due to the keen interest and splendid munificence of the Nawabs of Avadh. The Lucknow style, therefore, is justly entitled to a much greater measure of appreciation than it has hitherto received from the critics of Indian architecture. That the local rulers took pains to maintain even partially the old traditions and standards of Mughal India is in itself of sufficient interest. Their inability or failure to attain the eminence of the Great Mughals in the domain of architecture was not due entirely, and certainly not in every case, to their personal mediocrity or degeneration. The inferiority of the Lucknow monuments as compared with those of Agra and Delhi was largely a reflex of an altered situation arising from factors beyond the control of the Nawabs of Lucknow.

#### AVADH RULERS HANDICAPPED

The rulers of Avadh had the misfortune to find themselves in circumstances infinitely more unfavourable than those of the Mughal rulers, and they had to face handicaps unknown to the latter.

Firstly, their financial resources were extremely limited, and, extravagant though they were, they could not dream of the facilities and funds which the Great Mughals had ordinarily commanded.

Secondly, marble or even good sandstone was not so easily available in Avadh as it could be in Agra and Delhi. So, the Nawabs had to content themselves with brick edifices which certainly cannot be as alluring as the marble and red sandstone monuments of the Mughal cities.

Thirdly, craftsmanship had deteriorated in Northern India during and after the reign of Aurangzeb (for which the

Nawabs of Avadh were in no way responsible), and therefore the master-builders of the Great Mughals were rarely available when Shuja-ud-Daulah was busy consolidating his power at Faizabad, or when Asaf-ud-Daulah removed his headquarters from Faizabad to Lucknow, and inaugurated an era of building enterprise which continued until 1856 when the last ruler was deposed and Avadh was annexed by the British. The decadent look that is noticeable in the later Lucknow buildings was really due to the sudden break in the architectural traditions of medieval India caused by the puritanism of Aurangzeb and the ceaseless political disorders that followed his death.

Fourthly, bound hand and foot as the Nawabs were to a subsidiary alliance with the East India Company, their country was politically isolated from the rest of India, and there was little chance of its contact with the stream of artistic traditions which still continued in the obscurer parts of Central India and Rajputana such as the states of Datia, Orchha, Udaipur, Jaipur, etc.

Lastly, the predominant influence of the Europeans in the Court of Lucknow was also responsible for the demoralization of architectural ideals and decadence of style. The craftsmen had to imitate the more fashionable European models, and thus they ended by debasing and perverting their own indigenous art in a way that excites the ridicule of modern critics. This craze for European art was a result of political factors over which the Nawabs had little control.

#### SPECIAL FEATURES

Essentially, the Lucknow style may be classified as a provincial type of Indo-Muslim architecture. But, there are certain features in it which have a peculiar interest, and which not inconsiderably enhance the individuality of its basic character. These features attract the notice of even a casual observer. The emblem of the fish, for instance, is a beautiful contribution to decorative design. This motif is in harmony with Indian ideas of ornamentation. The fish was in fact an emblem of royalty, assumed by Saadat Ali Khan, the founder of the Avadh monarchy. The piscine motif is a characteristic of Lucknow style, and it has been adopted

so widely in the buildings and gateways that it may be regarded as the distinctive badge of Lucknow architecture.

The gilt umbrella ("Chhutter") over the top of a building or a dome is another special motif of the Lucknow style. These shining umbrellas have a pleasing effect both in dazzling sunshine and in soft moon-light. This motif is also peculiarly Indian in character.

The designs of the arcaded pavilion ("Baradari") is an equally noteworthy contribution of Lucknow. It may not have the appeal associated with the grander creations of the Mughals, but, even as it is, it is sufficiently attractive.

The gateway ("Darwaza") is also a characteristic feature of the Lucknow buildings. It has grace as well as dignity which cannot be overlooked. The famous Rumi Darwaza which is wrongly regarded as a facsimile of one of the gates of Constantinople can stand comparison with its Mughal counterpart in point of beauty, if not in point of grandeur.

The lay-out of garden ("Bagh") was a special feature of Lucknow architecture. The style was not Mughal, yet it was a local adaptation of the traditional style. The garden was decorated with pools, wells, fountains and pavilions affording a cool retreat in summer heat. The garden between the two Chhutter Manzils is no longer in existence, yet from contemporary evidence it appears to have been the finest among the gardens of India existing in those days. One European observer went in raptures over the beauty of this garden, and wrote about it in such glowing terms as these : "Such a place ! the only residence I have coveted in India ! Don't you remember reading, in the *Arabian Nights*, Zobedie bets her Garden of Delight amidst the Caliph's Palace of Picture ? I am sure this was the Garden of Delight."

The vaulted halls of Lucknow are another local characteristic. Brick-built as they are, they are no less interesting than those of Agra and Delhi. The hall, for instance, of the Great Imambara is the supreme wonder and is known to be the biggest arched apartment in the world. In point of structural design and decoration, it could beat anything of its kind ever constructed anywhere else in India.

Mention may also be made of the romantic labyrinth which is a well-known local feature. The labyrinth of the Great Imambara is a fine conception of which the Lucknow architect might well have been proud.

Lastly, who could forget the wonderful underground chambers ("Fahkhanas") of Lucknow? They are in some respects remarkable, and are more imaginative than the similar creations of the Mughals. The multiple underground storeys of the Chhutter Manzil, for instance, are unequalled by any similar attempt elsewhere. The manner in which these underground storeys have been placed along the river-side is surprisingly ingenious.

#### GREAT IMAMBARA

Now, the *magnum opus* of the Lucknow style of architecture is the Great Imambara which was built in 1784 at a cost of a crore of rupees by that extravagant and generous Nawab, Asaf-ud-Daulah (1775-97). This is not only the most popular gem of local architecture, but may justly be regarded as one of the greatest and most imposing monuments of India. It was the fulfilment of a competitive design that was intended to rival in design and conception anything of this class ever conceived. Kifayatullah is the name of the designer who beat all his rivals, and whose plans were finally accepted. The conception of the building effectively pictures the ruler's grandiose scheme of a great edifice which would be no imitation of any known structure of this kind. The whole thing is an original creation. Viewed along with its dignified mosque with the two lofty minarets and the imposing Rumani Darwaza, the Great Imambara is worthy of the man who built it. The engineering skill involved in the building of its vaulted hall, measuring 160 ft. by 35 ft. and 50 ft. in height, has rightly extorted admiration of experts and laymen alike. It is worth remembering that this building is free from the admixture of European style, which proved to be the bane of the local school of architecture during the regime of the later Nawabs. Its decorative details may be inelegant at places, but they are not hybrid like those of the later buildings of Lucknow. Its plan is simple, virile and also dignified. Its gigantic arches are its most remarkable point, and had they been of marble they could well have outshone the finest monuments of the Great Mughals.

LA MARTINIERE

It was in the time of Asaf-ud-Daulah that the majestic La Martiniere, also remembered as Constantia (from the College motto "Labore et Constantia"), was built by a French soldier adventurer, General Claude Martin, who was evidently his own architect. The building now houses a college supported out of the funds bequeathed by the founder. Its elaborate and queer design, its arabesque decorations and classical bas-reliefs, its circular towers and crenellated tops, its fluted Corinthian pilasters, its columns, and, above all, its picturesque riverside location render it one of the most splendid chateaus in the Italian style. But, some of its details particularly of design and ornamentation, are not in the best taste. Many of them are not in harmony with the conventions of pure Palladian style. Still, it has to be admitted that Constantia is a romantic mansion, illustrative of all forms of architecture, and decorated with fine stucco-fretwork and bizarre figures of lions, men and women, including fantastic divinities of mythology. This building which marks the first introduction of Europeanized style in Lucknow influenced the local architecture in the following years. If the subsequent buildings exhibit a curious jumble of western and eastern forms, this development was due to the baneful influence of Constantia. Inspired by the strange innovations of this building, the local craftsmen ended by copying pseudo-classical features in a very debased manner and thereby hybridizing their own art. The hybridization is complete when we see the juxtaposition of triangular pediments, Corinthian capitals and Roman round arches with fluted domes, ogee arcades and arabesque foliage.

QAISAR BAGH MAUSOLEUMS

The two tombs at Qaisar Bagh built by Ghaziuddin Haider (1814–27) in which Saadat Ail Khan (1798–1814) and his wife, Khurshedzadi, lie buried, are perhaps the best examples of the local style of mausoleum, and, although they have been generally overlooked both by the hurried sightseers and the art critics, they are nevertheless extremely pretty and interesting. The proportionate domes, the elegant kiosks, the fine "kalasha" (water-pot) finials, and above all, the well-balanced plan of the buildings are worthy of note.

Cheaply plastered and brick-built as they are, they fully deserve a close inspection and appreciation. There is more artistry in them than even in the Imambara buildings. The latter may be more spectacular, but these two tombs, small though they are, look more graceful and well-proportioned. Architecturally, there is little left to be desired except a better material like stone or marble.

Saadat Ali, though not as generous and lavish a ruler as his brother, Asaf-ud-Daulah, was certainly not miserly. A number of fine structures were constructed during his rule, and large sums were spent by him in adorning the eastern part of Lucknow. Practically all the notable buildings that lie between the Dilkusha and the Residency were erected by him. Those which are architecturally important are the stately Lal Baradari, the lovely Dilkusha ("Heart's Delight") Palace, the stylish Sikandar Bagh, and the Residency. The peculiarity of the constructions of the Lal Baradari is the use of wooden anthropostylar bases holding the verandah proof pillars. The Dilkusha Palace was intended to be an elegant hunting box encircled by a lovely garden, and its present deposited appearance does not reflect its original glory. The Sikandar Bagh was also a pretty garden house now in ruins. It may be mentioned here incidentally that the surviving gateway of Sikandar Bagh, though partially an imitation of the European style, has been admired by the renowned connoisseur, Mr. E. B. Havell. Its simple dignity and artistic conceptions are worthy of note, and as Mr. Havell has pointed out, ". . . the native craftsman . . . has built in a classic style which has all the vitality and freedom of a real Pompeian Villa". This gateway is a proof of the fact that the Indian craftsman could, given the proper encouragement, assimilate the best of the western styles and graft them on to his own indigenous art.

The Residency, a historic building constructed in 1800 for the use of the British Resident, and impregnated with the memory of a heroic siege during the Revolution of 1857, is a remarkable monument, although it is now in a partially ruined state. Its present dilapidated look does not indicate that it was once one of the finest groups of structures in Lucknow. Nawab Saadat Ali Khan did his best to build a worthy residence for the British Resident, and it was indeed a fine mansion. Standing on one of the most elevated spots

in the City, the Residency presented a dignified appearance with its pretty garden, extensive ground floor and two lofty upper storeys. Its cellar of under-ground chambers (*Tahkhanas*) illustrates one of the most distinctive features of the Lucknow style of architecture.

#### LATER BUILDINGS

The Moti Mahal (so designated from the resemblance of one of its domes to a pearl) built by Ghaziuddin Haidar, the Shah Najaf, the latter's mausoleum, so called from Najaf, the hill on which stands the tomb of Muhammad's son-in-law, Ali, the Husainabad Imambara built by Muhammad Ali Shah (1837-42), and the Maqbara (mausoleum) of Amjad Ali Shah (1842-47) are among the most interesting monuments of the kind in Lucknow. But, the style of these later buildings is chiefly characterized by outward ostentation and unseemly pretence. The style has thus no spiritual values. The details of these buildings are often gaudy and even tawdry. They betray the vain attempt of the craftsman to ape the European style. Notwithstanding all this, however, these buildings are of sufficient architectural interest. The riverside Moti Mahal Palace was the most attractive residence of the kind in Lucknow. The Shah Najaf is a remarkable structure on account of its single crowning dome of imposing dimensions. In point of beauty, the Husainabad Imambara is the rival of the prettiest buildings of Lucknow. The general design and layout are artistic, but the admixture of hybrid ornamentation is an unfortunate feature of this building. For instance, the worthless imitation of the model of the Taj in the garden betrays the vilest of taste. But, the mosque to the west of the Imambara begun so late as in the days of Muhammad Ali Shah is one of the finest examples of the local art. The three well-formed cupolas and the two lofty minarets together with the interior walls decorated with arabesques and the arches coloured in stucco indicate a high order of local craftsmanship, and are illustrative of the fact that the master-builders could still produce truly Indian structures in spite of the debasing influence of contemporary pseudo-Italian art which was then regarded as fashionable in Lucknow. The Maqbara of Amjad Ali Shah may not have been of architectural pretensions or beauty, yet, it is a typical illustration of the Lucknow style of the later period.

The buildings of the closing period of the "Nawabi" rule are on the whole of a debased style which betrays a perverted taste. Their framework is a decadent Mughal style, and this is adorned with classical motifs usually of an inappropriate character. This admixture is entirely graceless and the gaudy details produced a bizarre effect. The two Chhutter Manzil palaces facing the river bank are positively ungraceful on account of their hybrid style, even though their construction is sufficiently ingenious in so far as their underground storeys are concerned. The buildings of the last ruler of Lucknow, Wajid Ali Shah, (1847-56) are of a grossly hybrid style. His Qaiser Bagh palaces and the Chaulakha Darwaza look positively ugly and bastard, and are an instance of a senseless mimicry of an alien style. Such buildings could well be put down as monuments of vulgar extravagance. They might appear to be sumptuous, yet the observer cannot fail to note their ostentatious frivolity and voluptuous extravagance. It is believed that the royal builder spent nearly a crore on these buildings, but so unmindful of style was the ruler, that he totally sacrificed taste and quality for mere show.

#### CHARMING STYLE

But, when all is said, the fact remains that the architecture of Lucknow has a characteristic of its own. It may not have the rich variety of some of its counterparts elsewhere in India. Its buildings may lack the poetic appeal which one would associate with those of some other historic centres of India. Still, the Lucknow style has in itself all the charms of a period picture. Its tone was always "Nawabi." It was "Nawabi" in its greatness, just as it was "Nawabi" in its decadence. The critic may detect in the building much that is gaudy and even heterogeneous. But, it is all of the period and has a unique human interest. The points of outstanding excellence, no less than those of crude vulgarity, have lent a peculiar atmosphere to the architecture of Lucknow. This atmosphere is characteristic of the "Nawabi" days of Lucknow. The architectural achievements and also failures of the Nawabs of Avadh represent one of the dying phases of the Indo-Muslim art in India. As such, they possess an abiding interest of their own in the annals of India's artistic heritage.

## THE TAJ

Of the Taj Mahal, the glory of Agra, which is the *chef d'oeuvre* of medieval Indian architecture, it has justly been said that it is "a house not made with hands", "a fairy palace raised by some genii in an Arabian Night's Tale". This exquisite mausoleum is indeed India's tribute to the grace of Indian womanhood and is a memorial to the romantic love of an Emperor wrought into living marble. The Taj is truly the Venus de Milo of India. Its elegant design with its dainty curves all covered in white creates the living impression of Arjumand Banu Begum, the beloved queen of Shahjahan, better known by her other name, Mumtaz Mahal ("the Crown of the Palace"), moving about with queenly dignity and rhythmic footsteps in her orchard by the side of the Yamuna. The whole monument is wonderfully suggestive of the queen's grace and beauty. Is it not Mumtaz herself, buoyant in her womanly spirits, still adorning the river banks of Agra like an eternal dream in marble?

Mumtaz Mahal was married to the Emperor Shahjahan in 1612 at the age of nineteen years. The Prince was then nearly twenty-one years old. The marriage proved to be a unique love-match, and Mumtaz won the undying devotion of her husband and enjoyed a considerable influence in the administration like the Empress Nurjehan, Jahangir's wife. Like Nurjehan she was noted as much for her liberality as for her beauty. She bore the Emperor fourteen children and died in child-bed at Burhanpur in 1630. Shahjahan was so overwhelmed with sorrow at her death that he refused to see any of his Ministers or transact any government business for one whole week. The Emperor even thought of resigning the throne and partitioning the empire among his sons. The royal court observed strict mourning for two years and during this period music and festivities were banned; the wearing of jewels and use of perfumes and other articles of luxury were disallowed. The month in which she died was treated for a long time afterwards as a period of mourning. A fitting mausoleum was needed for her, and the Taj was

planned and built at the then imperial city of Agra where the body of the queen was removed from the south.

#### STORY OF THE CONSTRUCTION

The story of the construction of the Taj reads like a romantic tale. The Emperor resolved to spare no efforts to build a monument of his sorrow which would be one of the marvels of the world. All his imperial resources were at the disposal of architects and they were ordered to produce a grand design for the tomb. Plans of many of the well-known monuments of the world were carefully compared and analysed. The design finally approved was that of Ustad Ahmad. The theory that the architect was one Geronimo Veroneo, an Italian who was then in Mughal service, has now been discarded, and is no more than a dreary illustration of the unconscious conceit of the older school of European writers like Vincent Smith who assumed that anything of outstanding merit in India must have originated from the West.

In accordance with the Mughal custom, a garden was selected as the site for the monument—a splendid garden on the banks of the beautiful Yainuna, fragrant with flowers which are the emblems of life and joy, and planted with solemn cypresses which are the emblems of death and eternity. The garden was to be an essential part of one great plan. Such has been the super-abundance of encomium showered on the fairy-like Taj itself that one is apt to forget that but for the alluring setting of the "Paradise-like Orchard" this world-famed monument would have lost much in beauty and interest.

The view of the Taj from any part of the garden is enchanting. The tomb stands at one end like a fairy maiden in the midst of poetic surroundings. The elegant water-canals, like the emblem of purity, and the trees and shrubs in the parterres laid out along the canal bring into prominence every line of the architectural design. One simply wonders how so much beauty could come from the juxtaposition of garden and tomb in one harmonious whole. The rows of cypresses bring the beauty of the architecture into bold relief. The flowers and shrubs likewise provide an artistic contrast of colours to the pearl-white surface of the edifice.

The master-builders hailed from different parts of Asia—the chief masons from Baghdad, Delhi and Multan, the mosaic-workers from Kanauj and from Baghdad, the chief calligraphist for the inscriptions from Shiraz. Similarly materials were obtained from every part of India and Central Asia—the marble from Rajputana, the red sandstone from Fatehpur-Sikri, jasper from the Punjab, jade and crystal from China, turquoises from Tibet, lapis lazuli and sapphires from Ceylon, coral and cornelian from Arabia, diamonds from Bundelkhand, onyx and amethyst from Persia. Twenty thousand men were employed in the construction which was completed in twenty-two years. The total expenditure which has been variously estimated was between two and three crores of rupees. This sum of course includes the cost of the main building amounting to Rs.50 lakhs and the cost of the whole group of buildings and of its luxurious fittings and decorations such as screens, doors, carpets, lamps and the sheet of pearls, valued at several lakhs, meant to be used as a covering for the sarcophagus.

#### INLAY WORK

The entrance gate which by itself is a superb structure provides the first view of the Taj through the solemn shadows of the imposing arch opening on the Gardens of Paradise. Linger on the steps by moon-light or at day-break or in the subdued light of evening, and the charm is irresistible. Advancing through the garden, we reach the main tomb and its four shapely and slender minarets, "four court ladies tending their princes". In the central chamber lie the remains of Mumtaz Mahal and Shahjahan.

The inlay work in the Taj has received exuberant praise. Its *pietra-dura* technique is supposed to have been introduced by Italian workmen. But, from the Indian chronicles it does not appear that Europeans did the inlay work, for the names of Hindu inlayers, Chirangi Lal, Chhotey Lal, Mannu Lal and Manohar Singh, who received high salaries, are still on record. Besides, the *pietra-dura* is Persian in character and the motifs are all Persian. In the absence of definite evidence, it cannot, therefore, be stated that the Italians in the Mughal court introduced a new art in India. The foreign workmen may have been employed for cutting the precious stones used in the inlay work. The Indians

had nothing new to learn about the technique of inlay from the Italians as the art had been popularized by the Arab and the Persian styles.

Every one who has seen this exquisite mausoleum must have felt that its central hall possesses an unearthly appeal which cannot be defined or analysed, and which invests the whole edifice with a dignity reminiscent of the eternal spirit of Indian womanhood. The august hall, with its glimmering haze and its pearly lineament of marble, is a fitting resting-place for the Great Mumtaz who is buried here. It truly symbolizes the Elysian retreat of the departed queen. As one enters the hall, one is overwhelmed by an ethereal charm that permeates its architectonic conception. It is verily a fairy chamber raised, as it were, by some genii in an Arabian Night's tale.

The bewitching exterior of the Taj has received such an abundance of encomium that one is apt to forget that but for the wondrous stillness and serenity of the hall, the world-famed tomb would have lost not a little in its appeal and effect. It is the splendid parlour which creates a background of sanctity and repose without which the very intention of the tomb would have been incomplete and inarticulate. This atmosphere typifies a paradisaic shrine which, in its symbolic aspects, has an abiding charm of its own. Its mysterious depths and jewelled shadows stand for death, immortality and love—all rolled into one synthetic whole!

#### CENTRAL CHAMBER

The very first view of the central chamber from its noble recessed portal is captivating. Its serene and sombre light enchantss the visitor, as he quietly steps in. The white marble interior presents a dream spectacle of shadow twilight—like the appearance of Mumtaz herself in her celestial comeliness—which seems to rest so gently, so lightly, on the floor, as if in the twinkling of an eye it would fly aloft into the skies. The seduction of the hall lies in its consummate artistry, and one is surprised to notice that so much beauty could be concentrated in the harmony of its design. But, as a matter of fact, no description can reproduce its lovely grace which is heightened in the glimmer of noon-day light penetrating through the double set of marble lattice screens.

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The central hall is 60 ft. in diameter, and is surmounted by a double dome with an inner depth of more than 60 ft. between the two domes. Such is the ingenuous balance of the entire vaulted space that it has acquired acoustic qualities which are truly remarkable. It would not respond to discordant sounds, but in case one chants or sighs slowly and sonorously inside the hall, the tuneful notes are at once echoed in one prolonged symphony which creates the illusion of a heavenly choir playing a divine melody. The echo reverberates in the air overhead and on all sides ; it falls softly on the responsive marble which seems to possess the warmth and the texture of life ; it ascends and descends in tune with the rise and fall of the musical note. And, it seems like the stuff of which dreams are made ! It is the very embodiment of the soul of the Taj, the voice of eternal love and romance.

The magnificent octagonal screen of marble tracery which encloses the two cenotaphs—one of Shahjahan and the other of Mumtaz—is a gem of decorative art—a *magnum opus* in itself. Notwithstanding the vast resources which the royal builder could have easily commanded, the screen, it is said, was completed in ten years. This, in fact, replaced the original fence of solid gold, studded with gems, which was removed from fear of being despoiled. There is a tradition which ascribes its erection to Aurangzeb. But, it is hard to believe that masterpiece of such supreme craftsmanship could have been possible in the reign of a puritanical Emperor who disdained all extravagance of art. The design of pierced screens is masterly, and it reminds one of alabaster lace. All in all, this work of art is unsurpassed in the whole range of Mughal tracery.

### THE SCREEN

The screen has formed the subject-matter of an interesting controversy. The lines of its repeating pattern are supposed to betray Italian influence. Even Sir John Marshall who rejected the story of the Italian designer of the Taj was of the opinion that this pattern is more Italian than Asiatic. The *pietra dura* decoration has been supposed to bear traces of the technique of Florence. It is true that Shahjahan had a cosmopolitan taste which is evident from the employment of European artists and jewellers, and that it is not unlikely

that the latter might have supplied some specimens of Florentine *pietra dura* and suggested to the local craftsmen this naturalistic treatment. But, there is no original evidence to prove the theory of Italian influence. The *pietra dura* work undertaken during this period was on such a vast scale that it is difficult to believe that handful of Italians could have designed or supervised it. Besides, the designs are Persian in character. So, in the absence of conclusive evidence, it may be assumed that the *pietra dura* in the screen is an inlay work of Persian technique. It is not improbable, however, that Europeans may have been employed for cutting the stones used in the inlay work. The inlaid decoration on the screen is so wonderful that it has to be seen to be fully appreciated. As many as 60 or 70 tiny pieces of precious stones have been embedded together to make a single flower design.

Contemporary accounts give some valuable information about the chief craftsmen and materials of the screen. The master-carver was Bebadal Khan who received a salary of Rs.500 per month. The chief inlay workers were Hindus from Kashmir and North India—Chiranji Lal, Chhotey Lal, Mannu Lal and Manohar Singh—who all received equally high salaries. The rates at which the precious or semi-precious stones used in the inlay work were purchased have been recorded. They are as follows: Jasper (from the Punjab), cornelian (from Baghdad), turquoises (from Tibet), agate (from Arabia) and lapis lazuli (from Ceylon). They were all obtained at an average rate of Rs.1,156 per sq. yd. Crystal came from China at Rs.570 per sq. yd. The white marble was obtained from Jaipur, the rate being Rs.40 per sq. yd. Coloured marble was of course costlier.

#### THE CENOTAPH

Let us now enter the screened enclosure. At the centre there is the cenotaph of Mumtaz for whom the Taj was originally meant. Shahjahan himself had thought of building his own tomb opposite to the Taj on the other bank of the Yamuna, and of joining the two tombs by a marble bridge. But, before this ambitious scheme could be executed, the Emperor fell ill and was later deposed by his son, Aurangzeb. The latter refused to build a separate tomb for his father, and buried his remains after his death by the side of Mumtaz Mahal. Thus, the two cenotaphs lie close to

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each other and symbolize a union that physical parting could not asunder. The queen's cenotaph is marked by a tablet, while that of Shahjahan by a pen-case.

There are fine inscriptions on the cenotaphs. The inscription on the queen's tomb is as follows : "The illustrious Sepulchre of Arjumand Banu Begam, called Mumtaz Mahal. Died in 1040 (A.D. 1630)." At the head of the cenotaph is the following line : "He is everlasting : He is sufficient". It is followed by a text from the Koran : "God is He, besides whom there is no God. He knoweth what is concealed and what is manifest. He is merciful and compassionate." On one side is the line : "Nearer up to God are those who say, 'Our Lord is God' ". The inscription on the Emperor's cenotaph is as follows : The illustrious Sepulchre and sacred resting place of His Most Exalted Majesty, dignified as the guardian of Paradise, having his abode in Paradise, and his dwelling in the starry heaven, inhabitant of the regions of bliss, the second lord of the conjunction of Jupiter and Venus, Shahjahan, the king valiant. May his tomb ever flourish, and may his abode be in the heavens. He travelled from this transitory world to the world of eternity on the night of the 8th of the month of Rajab, A. H. 1076" (A. D. 1666).

The marble floor of the hall is smooth and polished, and one loves to linger here for a while and watch the artistic dado on the walls, depicting plants of varying designs carved in bold relief. It may be pointed out here that the sarcophagi containing the actual mortal remains of the Emperor and his wife are placed down below in the crypt underneath the central hall. In old days the lower vault was opened only once a year on the anniversary day, when admission was allowed only to Muslins. Bernier writes in his Travels that he was not allowed to see it on this ground.

The central hall is, in short, a triumph of simplicity and decoration. One is attracted as much by the elegance and workmanship of tracery and inlay, as by the chaste whiteness and velvet gleam of the marble walls and the encasing dome.

#### LOVE WROUGHT INTO STONE

The Taj may find detractors, but they will not understand that their conventional standards are "silly" and

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"impertinent". Sir Edwin Arnold has voiced the truth in the following lines :

*"Not Architecture ! as all others are,  
But the proud passion of an Emperor's love  
Wrought into living stone, which gleams and  
soars,*

*With body of beauty shining soul and  
thought ;*

*———As when some face  
Divinely fair unveils before our eyes—  
Some women beautiful unspeakably—  
And the blood quickens, and the spirit leaps  
And will to worship bend the half-yielded  
knees,*

*While breath forgets to breathe. So is the  
Taj."*

### THE GARDENS

It has been aptly said that it is in its gardens that the history of a country finds a true and living reflection. The gardens symbolize the artistic and cultural ideals of a nation more picturesquely and in a more subtle manner than is ever possible even in the case of its architectural monuments. The Mughal gardens which may be justly regarded as one of the finest contributions to Indian art mirror the outlook and taste of their builders in a truly elegant style. The exquisite orchard of the Taj which forms an inseparable part of the general layout of the magnificent mausoleum is, for example, Shahjahan's last tender tribute to the memory of his departed wife, Arjuinand Banu Begani, better known by her other name, Mumtaz Mahal.

Such has been the superabundance of praise showered on the fairy-like tomb itself that one is apt to forget that but for the alluring setting of the "Paradise-like Orchard" this world-famed monument would have lost much in beauty and interest. It is the lovely gardens which invest the Taj with a dream-like, indefinable spell and create an atmosphere

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of tranquillity and repose without which the very conception of the tomb would have remained incomplete and inarticulate. These gardens are, indeed, a fitting ornament for the romantic Lady of the Taj !

The conception underlying the gardens is that of a Paradise affording peaceful shelter to the departed soul, and it is in its symbolic aspects that the orchard of the Taj has an abiding appeal of its own. The very plan of the gardens stands for the four-fold Paradise of restfulness and typifies life, death, love and eternity—all rolled into one great whole.

#### INTEGRAL WHOLE

The four water-channels which radiate north, south, east and west from the central platform and fountain symbolize the fertilizing streams of life, and within the high walls enclosing the tomb the gardens are laid out in geometrical flower-beds with avenues of solemn cypresses standing for the idea of death and mourning. The raised fountain-tank of white marble standing in the centre of the conventional and simple four-fold field plot is the emblem of cosmic force and eternity. The whole design of the gardens thus artistically fits in with the central idea of the mausoleum of Mumtaz Mahal, and together both go to form an integral whole, while neither is architecturally perfect or harmonious without the other.

Bernier has referred in his Travels to the gay parterres in the gardens which he visited in about 1660. He says, "To the left and right of the dome on the lower surface you observe several garden-walks covered with trees and many parterres of flowers . . . Between the end of the principal walk and the dome is an open and pretty large space, which I call a water parterre, because the stones on which you walk, cut and figured in various forms, represent the borders of box in our parterres." These beautiful parterres are ornamented with flowers emblematic of the joys of life. The star-shaped and oblong designs were filled in with flowers, and planted with small trees including the cypress. All these were full of meaning and symbolism in the last resting-place of the Lady of the Taj.

The site of the gardens on the steep bank of the Yamuna harmonises with the inner spirit of the entire monument.

In the absence of a lofty mountain-side for a setting such as one which could be available in Kashmīr, the gardens of the Taj are placed against a steep river-bank, and the advantages offered by the site are fully exploited to provide charm and seclusion to the whole surroundings. The large, octagonal Baradaris on the corners might be easily used as pleasant summer-houses from which the view of the slow-moving, majestic Yamuna is unusually pleasing.

#### GARDENS OF PARADISE

It is only when the underlying conception of the gardens is borne in mind that one is able to understand the real significance of its popular and suggestive designation, "the Gardens of Paradise". A beautiful Arabic inscription inlaid in black marble, on the imposing arch of the lofty gateway of the Taj greets the visitors and invites the pure of heart to enter "the Gardens of Paradise". The view of the gardens from within the splendid portal is, indeed, enchanting. The graceful mausoleum stands at the opposite end of the gardens like a fairy-maiden in the midst of poetic surroundings.

The white marble of the Taj needs a soft and soothing background, otherwise it would have been tiresome for the eyes to look at.

In the conventional Mughal gardens, the centre of the four-fold field-plot formed the usual site for the Baradari or tomb from which the four water-ways were to flow. The gardens of the Taj were, however, differently designed. The mausoleum was placed on a raised platform at the other end of the gardens on the river bank, and not at the centre. The marble fountain-tank occupying the central position in the gardens marks an improvement on the traditional design and is one of the most striking features of the Taj gardens. A fine view of the Taj may be had from this central platform and it offers a good vantage ground to the approaching visitor.

The innovation needs some explanation. A number of reasons may be suggested to explain the placing of the tomb at the end of the gardens on the river-bank. It is likely that the natural beauty of the steep river-side may have attracted the Emperor. Again, it is also possible that the Emperor wanted to view the tomb from his balconies in the distant

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palace of the Agra Fort, and so he may have liked its ground-plot to be shifted from the centre of the gardens to the river bank visible from the distant Fort. Or, in the words of C. M. Villiers Stuart, maybe some Hindu influence, inherited from his Rajput mother, unconsciously led him to raise the tomb on the banks of the Yamuna placing the tank for the lotus lilies of the Lord Vishnu in the centre of the garden. But the most plausible view is that Shahjahan may have intended to erect a mausoleum for himself on the other side of the river—to be connected with the Taj by means of a fine marble bridge with the bridge-way as the glorious centre piece of this grand architectural scheme.

#### WHO PLANNED THE GARDENS ?

Who planned the gardens of the Taj ? This is a question which is still a subject of controversy. European scholars like the Rev. H. Hosten have supposed that both the Taj and its gardens were designed by one Geronimo Veroneo, an Italian who was then in the Mughal service and died at Lahore in 1640.

The evidence adduced in support of the theory of the Italian origin of the gardens of the Taj is highly problematical and unconvincing. According to Catrou, the Delhi gardens of Shahjahan were laid out by a Venetian. His account runs thus : "SHA-JAHAM's principal care was to make a couple of gardens of an inconceivable magnificence in his palace of DELY. A Venetian drew the plans of them, somewhat after the model of those magnificent vineyards which serve as ornaments in Italy. As it was difficult to bring water into them from the river GEMNA for making canals, he turned the course of another river into it, whose bed was about thirty leagues, distant from DELY. A new channel was cut all the way, which brought it into the Emperor's gardens. These canals were stocked with fishes of a prodigious bigness, with gold rings fastened to the snouts of them and garnished, as is said, each with a rubie and two diamonds" (*vide* F. Catrou, S. J. General *History of the Mogol Empire*, London, 1709, page 224).

The Rev. H. Hosten has argued from this passage that this Venetian was Veroneo, and that if the latter had planned the gardens at Delhi, he "must have designed the Taj gardens

too" (*vide* journal of U. P. Historical Society, Vol. III, Part I, page 159). This kind of reasoning is extremely hypothetical and unconvincing. Besides, Catrou's evidence is corroborated by no other reliable authority. No other European traveller supports his story. Furthermore, the entire plan of the Taj gardens is of Asiatic design introduced into India by Mughals. Its symbolism, meaning and also its characteristic features, are all of Asiatic origin. There is really no trace of Italian influence in the design. Besides, there is no mention whatsoever of any European designer or artist in the contemporary Persian chronic. Above all, in the authentic accounts which are still preserved, of the craftsmen employed on the Taj gardens, we actually come across the name of an Indian gardener, Ram Lal Kashmiri. This shows that the famous Kashmir gardens of Jahangir and Nurjahan must have been the source of inspiration of the designer of the Taj gardens.

There is therefore no reason why we ought to attribute the laying out of the Taj gardens to some unknown Venetian. The character and layout of the plan militate against the theory of its European origin. The gardens, like the Taj itself, are the consummation of the united genius of the Hindus and Muslims and are one of the finest specimens of the craftsmanship of Mughal India.

#### WHO DESIGNED THE TAJ?

The very fact that the Taj is generally regarded as an architectural wonder of the world has been responsible for the endless speculation and controversy regarding the identification of the architect of this *chef d'oeuvre* of Shahjahan's reign. Some European writers have persistently regarded the Taj as a creation of European genius, and although this view has been thoroughly exposed by several responsible art critics, it still survives in some quarters.

Of the two legends relating to the supposed European designer of the Taj, one is on the face of it simply preposterous, and has been rejected by all modern writers. It is Sleeman who was responsible for the fanciful suggestion that Ustad Isa referred to in contemporary Persian chronicles as one of the chief architects employed by Shahjahan to build the Taj was no other than Austin-de-Bordeaux, a Frenchman

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in the Emperor's service, because the name "Ustad Isa" literally signifies "Master Jesus", i.e. a Christian, and as it is known that the latter alone was the most prominent European artist at the Mughal court at this time, he may have been popularly known as "Ustad Isa". This view is only an instance of utter ignorance of Indian History, and shows how easily a sensible writer like Sleeman could be misled by a name alone.

### A QUEER LEGEND

A queer legend which is slightly more plausible than the first one has been stoutly supported by writers like Keene, Vincent Smith, the Rev. H. Hosten, etc. A Spanish friar, Father Manrique, who came to India in Shahjahan's time is the original author of the story that a Venetian, Geronimo Veroneo, planned the Taj. The truth of this story entirely depends upon the credibility of Manrique's assertion, as no other contemporary traveller or chronicler repeats it.

A number of arguments have been advanced in support of Manrique's account. Firstly, that no Indian chronicler mentions Veroneo's name is not surprising, as the Muslim writers may have intentionally suppressed the details concerning the share of a European in the construction of the Taj in order to give the entire credit to Muslim architects. Secondly, there is no reason why Manrique should have wilfully concocted the story. He had every opportunity to learn the facts concerning the Taj. Besides he is known to have been on friendly terms with Asaf Khan, the father of Mumtaz. As such, he must be expected to have made his statement from personal knowledge. Thirdly, Manrique published his work in Europe in 1649, i.e. before the work on the Taj was completed, which shows that he wrote about it before he could have had a full idea of the grandeur of the finished building. Fourthly, although Veroneo died in Lahore, his body was brought to Agra where he was buried in 1640. This fact clearly indicates the importance of the man. Fifthly, the actual design of the tomb is not European, yet it was not impossible for a clever European to have made it in consultation with, and with the help of, local architects. Sixthly, as Veroneo died before the completion of the Taj, Ustad Isa may have been the chief superintending architect in the later stages of the construction, and this may be the reason why the

former's name has been ignored in the chronicles. Seventhly, Father Cairou wrote in his "*History of the Mughal Empire*" (London, 1709) that the Delhi gardens were planned by a Venetian. Father Hosten has argued that the Agra gardens were also planned by a Venetian, as the Anguribagh shows Italian design ; and because the garden of the Taj is a part and parcel of the building, and is co-ordinated with its architectural idea, it may be assumed that the same Venetian planned the Taj also. Eighthly, the proposed site and the foundation of Shahjahan's own tomb on the other side of the Yamuna indicate an un-Indian and Italian character. The proposed bridge over the Yamuna also could never have been planned by an Indian engineer, as no Indian had previously undertaken to bridge a river as broad as the Yamuna. Lastly, the famous screen railing round the cenotaph, and the inlay work show Italian influence, and support the story of the Italian designer of the Taj.

#### NO ITALIAN DESIGNER

Among the modern critics who have ridiculed the story of Manrique, the names of Mr. E. B. Havell, and Sir John Marshall are the most prominent. Both on historical and artistic grounds it may be convincingly shown that the legend of the European designer is fantastic.

The Persian chronicles have left the fullest details with respect to the Taj, its builders, their salaries, the total cost of the building, and its materials, etc. and they all mention the Turkish, the Irani, and the Indian architects, craftsmen, and gardeners. It would be absurd to say that they could all jointly conspire to suppress the name of a European. It is again noteworthy that no other European traveller corroborates Manrique's account. Had it been accurate, competent contemporary observers like Peter Mundy, Thevenot, Dom Mathews, Bernier, Tavernier, and Manucci would surely have been the first people to give due credit to a fellow European. These travellers have left to us detailed accounts of India, and some of them have given currency to the wildest of gossip heard by them. If they had heard anything about Veroneo's share in the Taj, they would surely have referred to it. It would be very strange, indeed, if they too had all conspired to ignore Veroneo's achievement. Manrique may not have wholly concocted the story as he had no

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other motive except to boost the work of a brother European, nor is it likely that responsible people in India should have misinformed him. It is probable that the Italian may have been employed in some humble capacity during the construction, and as he died long before the completion of the building, his name has not been mentioned in any chronicle.

But, all such speculations are idle and meaningless, when the contemporary official chronicle, *Amal-i-Salih*, has clearly mentioned that Ustad Ahmad and Ustad Hamid were the famous engineers employed for the construction of the Taj, and that Ustad Ahmad was the chief architect both of the Taj and the Delhi Fort.

### INDIAN CONCEPTION

The design of the Taj does not betray the slightest trace of the European influence. The only European influence may be said to be visible in the inlay work, but even this is denied by Havell who maintains that the *pietra dura* is Persian in style. As a matter of fact, the general plan of the tomb is taken from Humayun's tomb at Delhi. Of this there can be no doubt at all. In the latter monument also can be seen the introduction of that stone inlay which reached its perfection in the Taj, and its four corner cupolas and the narrow-necked dome were all adopted in the Taj which, however, so far surpasses its original in artistry of design, and poetry of symbolism that it is rightly considered as a class by itself.

The entire conception of the Taj is so Indian that the very mention of European influence in it sounds ridiculous. The whole internal evidence of the building militates against the theory of its European origin. Havell regards the Taj as an important link in the long chain of India's artistic tradition from the Buddhist age. Even as a Muslim monument, it has no parallel in other Muslim countries of the world. Its Hindu features are clear, and show that the Muslim craftsmen could not totally break the art traditions of India in spite of the Persianization of style during this period. The grouping of the five domes is the ancient *Pancharatna* symbolism of the Hindus for the five elements, an exact parallel of which is noticed by Havell in the eleventh century temple of Chandisewa at Prambanam in Java. The

so-called "bulbous" dome of the Taj is really the old lotus dome of the Buddhist period, and is totally unlike the Arab, the Persian, or the Tartar domes. That the lotus and the Kalasha finials on the central dome are Hindu needs no explanation, because these symbols are characteristically Hindu. The poetic combination of strength and grace in the design is again peculiarly Indian, and is found nowhere outside India in other Muslim countries.

#### THE HUMAN QUALITY

The human quality of the Taj is the supreme psychological proof of Indian character. There is a personality in the building which impress even the most casual observer. One actually feels on looking at it that it is "India's tribute to the grace of the Indian womanhood as the Venus de Milo of the east". The Taj is the expression in living marble of a superb conception of feminine beauty and conjugal love. Critics have sometimes found fault with the monument on the ground of its effeminate character, but they have thereby paid unconsciously the highest tribute to the genius of the builder. The Taj looks feminine because it is Mumtaz herself.

The building itself is a triumph of architectural creation of which India is justly proud today, and no amount of casuistry or propaganda can entitle an obscure European adventurer to be ranked as its designer. Its simplicity and chaste beauty, elegance and purity of material, superb inlay work, soft gleam of the subdued light inside the chamber, artistic personification of a husband's devotion for his wife, cumulative effect of shapely minarets and domes, beautiful combination of mosque, garden, gateways, and tomb, and last but not the least, the remarkable acoustic qualities of the building make it distinctly a monument of India's artistic genius.

Indeed, the Taj remains a source of infinite delight and wonder to visitors from all corners of the world.

#### WHAT DID THE TAJ MAHAL COST?

It might seem sacrilegious, if not foolish, to make an enquiry regarding the cost of this inimitable object of

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beauty. But, as curiosity regarding the financial aspect of this marvellous jewel of Indian art is both natural and excusable, it is not improper to form an idea of the prodigious expenditure incurred on this by the great royal builder whose name became a byword for extravagance.

The most curious fact that confronts those who are inquisitive about the cost of the Taj is that there is yet no correct estimate available from contemporary sources. Whatever details are to be found in this connexion are not only partial but misleading. The contemporary chronicler of Shahjahan's reign, Mulla Abdul Hamid Lahori, ends his description of the Taj with the following words :

"The cost of building the several edifices which are detailed above, and which were completed in nearly twelve years under the supervision of Makramat Khan and Mir Abdul Karim, amounted to fifty lakhs of rupees." If this account is correct, it would appear that the Taj cost no more than the paltry sum of half a crore of rupees. That this estimate is incredible needs no elaboration, for even a casual survey of some of the known details would go to establish that the actual cost must have been several times more than the sum mentioned by Lahori.

#### LABOUR AND STAFF

The amount spent on labour and supervisory staff alone must have been prohibitive. Authorities are not unanimous as to the time the Taj took for its construction. Lahori's statement has already been cited. It indicates that the building was completed in twelve years. It is evident that he has referred to the erection of the main mausoleum, and not to the entire group of buildings comprised in the Taj. The inscriptions on the buildings can give us a rough idea. The dates mentioned in various inscriptions show that the inscription carved on the main gateway was the last. Its date is A. H. 1057 (A. D. 1648).<sup>2</sup> Now, Mumtaz died in 1630, and the construction of the Taj commenced in the following year. Thus, it is clear that the main gateway was completed in about eighteen years' time. It is also certain that the construction work continued even afterwards. According to Tavernier, the contemporary European traveller, who witnessed both the commencement and also the

completion of the monument, the work was finished in twenty-two years. He has also stated that twenty thousand men worked incessantly during this period. Even assuming that labour was cheap in those days, and that forced labour may have been used to some extent, the expenditure incurred on twenty thousand men for twenty-two years must have been enormous.

Apart from ordinary labour, the salaries paid to the staff of engineers, overseers and artists must have amounted to a huge sum. From contemporary accounts it is clear that Shahjahan employed the foremost architects and artists available in that age. They came from all parts of Asia—India, Persia, Arabia, Baghdad, Turkey and Central Asia. Ustad Isa, the Naksha Nawis (plan-drawer) and chief architect and Amanat Khan Shirazi, the chief Tughra-writer and calligraphist, received a salary of Rs.1,000 per month. Muhammad Hanif, the master mason, also received an equal amount. ChirANJI Lal, the Kashmiri inlayer, drew Rs.800 a month. The number of superior artists alone was thirty-eight. Thus, the total pay roll of the higher grade staff alone might have been very high.

#### MATERIAL AND DECORATION

As for material, it is impossible to make even a rough estimate of the cost, for the huge quantity of precious and semi-precious stones came from the royal treasury and these were not purchased in the market. Much of the marble came as tribute from the ruling chiefs of India. A fair amount came as presents. Red sandstone came chiefly from royal quarries in Fatehpur-Sikri. Still, a huge quantity of marble and other stones had to be purchased at high rates. White and yellow marble cost Rs.50 per sq. yd., and black marble Rs.90. Jasper, cornelian, turquoise, agate and lapis lazuli cost Rs.1,156 per sq. yd. Crystal was secured at Rs.570 per sq. yd. The amount of red sandstone used was staggering. It is on record that one lakh and fourteen thousand cartloads came from Fatehpur-Sikri. The cartage alone would have cost several lakhs of rupees.

Some of the items of decoration were extremely costly. A few instances may be cited. According to Lahori, a railing of solid gold studded with precious stones was put up

### *The Taj*

round the sarcophagus. This itself was a master-piece of Indian jewellery. It weighed about forty thousand tolas of gold, and must have cost not less than six lakhs of rupees. The floor of the main hall was covered with the costliest Persian carpets, and the hall itself was illuminated with a variety of chandeliers and candelabra which are said to have cost lakhs of rupees. The superb marble enclosure inside the hall, which shows the perfection of Mughal *pietra dura*, is a gem of art which was completed in ten years. The cost of labour alone amounted to Rs.50,000 on this enclosure. It had a door of jasper which cost thousands of rupees. A magnificent sheet of pearls which was prepared for use as a covering over the tomb of Mumtaz is stated to have cost several lakhs of rupees. The silver gates of the Taj, which are said to have been deposited and melted down by the Jats, cost Rs.1,27,000.

The site chosen for the erection of the mausoleum was originally a place of Raja Man Singh. It was owned by the latter's grandson, Raja Jay Singh, in the time of Shahjahan. The owner was prevailed upon to part with his estate for a consideration. The Emperor did not, of course, pay for it in cash, but gave the Raja a big building with a good piece of land from the royal estate in exchange. Thus, the site too proved to be fairly expensive, in fact. When the work of construction was commenced on this site the preliminary diggings and the entire scaffoldings alone cost, according to Tavernier, more than the finished monument itself. Tavernier says, "It is said that the scaffoldings alone cost more than the entire work, because for want of wood, they had all to be made of brick, as well as the supports of the arches ; this has entailed much labour and a heavy expenditure". Again, the garden of the Taj which was considered peerless in Asia during those days, proved to be a costly affair, for its ornate marble canals, pavements and platforms, not to speak of its rare and precious plants, must have considerably enhanced the cost of the main buildings.

#### AN ESTIMATE

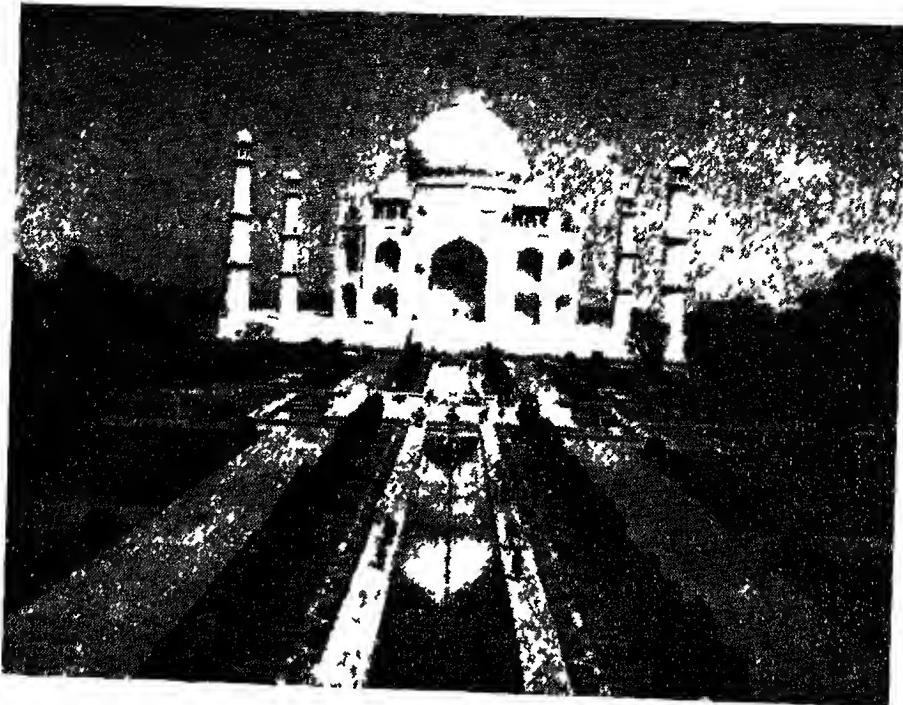
Taking into consideration all these facts, one may conclude that Abdul Hamid Lahori's estimate (i.e. Rs.50 lakhs) is no more than the ordinary expenditure incurred on salaries and wages only. The amount cannot be inclusive of

the cost of the site, material and decorative equipments. On the basis of some contemporary accounts, it has been estimated by some modern writers like Havell that the Taj may have cost nearly two crores of rupees. But, even this estimate is not fully accurate, for all the items of construction and ornamentation have not been accounted for. In a recently discovered contemporary Persian manuscript (in possession of Muhammad Moinuddin of Agra), a fairly detailed summary of accounts has been found. The accounts were kept by the Treasurer, Rodardas. It is not yet clear as to how far this manuscript is reliable. But, the figures available in this account may give an approximate idea of the total expenditure. The grand total of the figures is roughly about three crores of rupees. Thus, it can be safely assumed that the total cost of the Taj was not less than something between two and three crores of rupees.

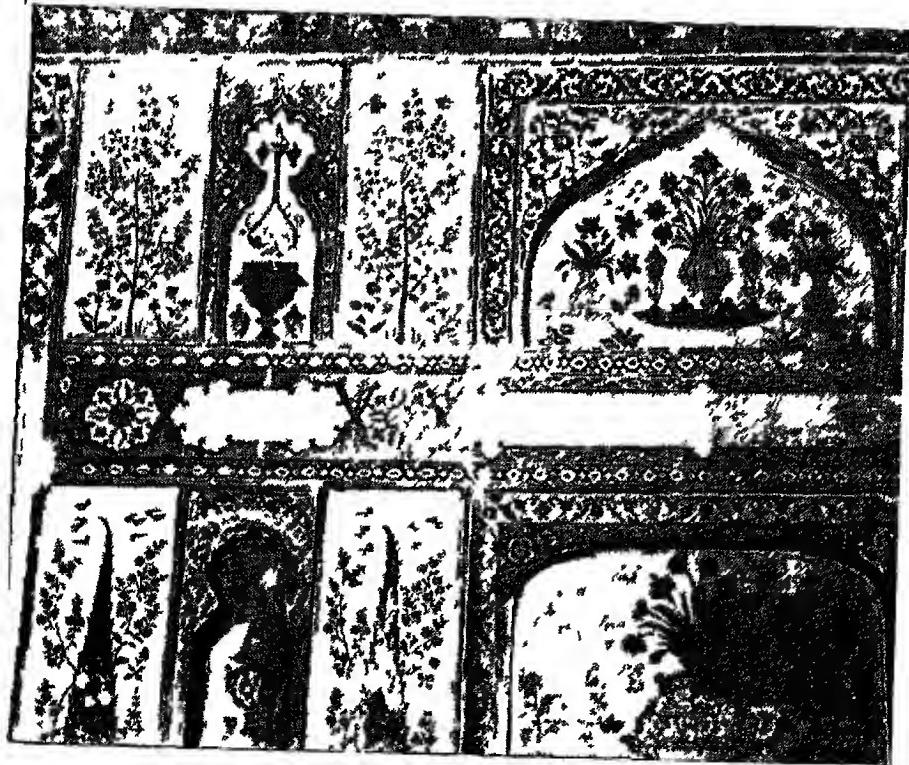
For the information of the curious readers, some of the items of expenditure as given in the aforesaid manuscript may be cited here :

	Rs.
The Rauza (tomb) .. .. ..	53,45,961
The four minarets .. .. ..	51,77,674
The marble screen .. .. ..	4,68,855
The main hall .. .. ..	8,45,615
The mosque .. .. ..	8,25,821
The eastern turrets .. .. ..	1,45,505
The western turrets .. .. ..	1,65,427
The middle tower .. .. ..	1,13,918
The river-side wall .. .. ..	1,22,212

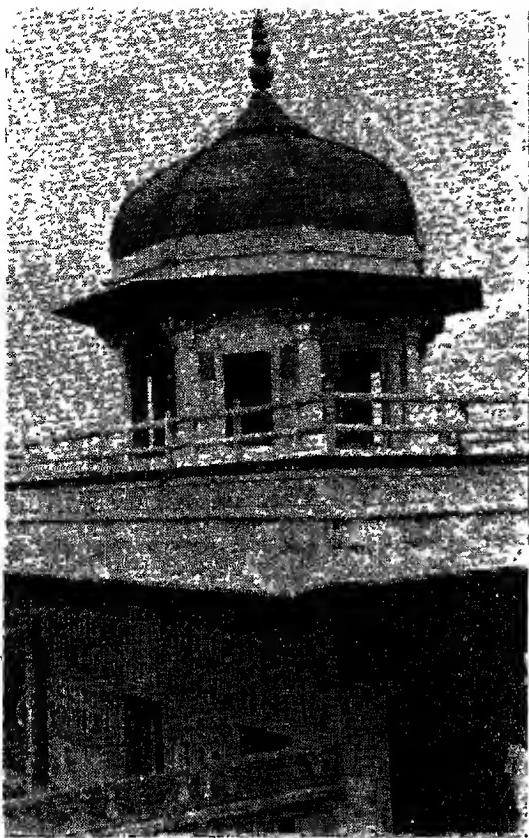
The modern critics who object to the extravagance involved in the construction of the Taj forget that a marvel of human art should not be judged by financial standards which are applicable to the Public Works Department. The Taj may or may not have symbolized the exploitation of the poor masses of India. That is a matter which may interest a Marxist fanatic. Any carping and uncharitable criticism on the score of cost in relation to the Taj Mahal is foolish, if not also impertinent. If the cost was high, it was worthy of a poem in marble arrayed in eternal glory.



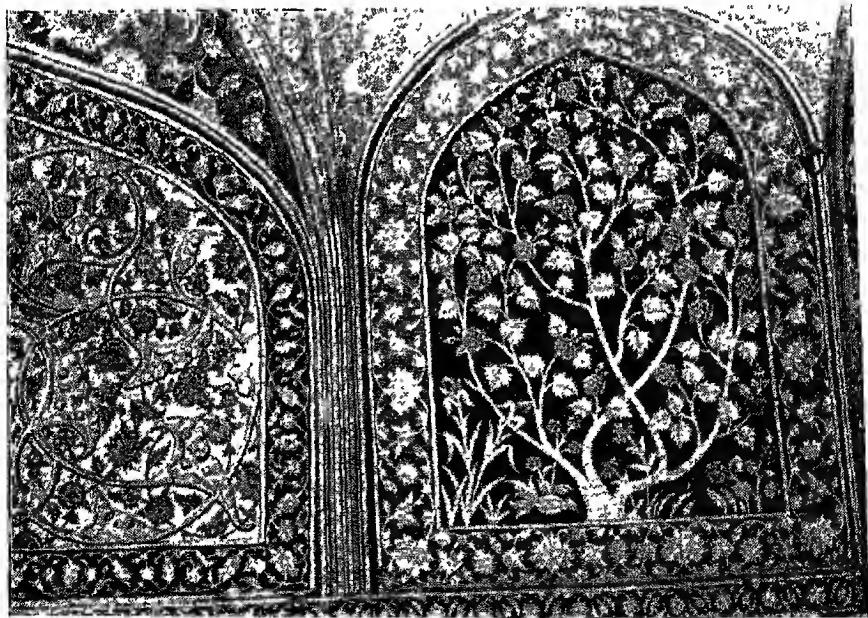
*The Taj*



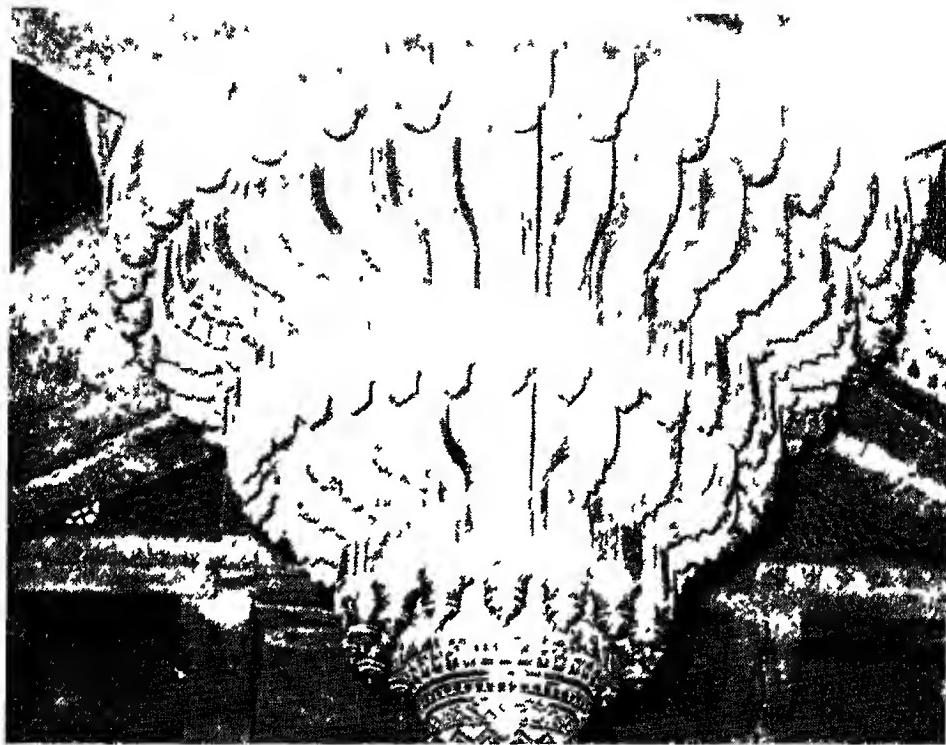
*Inlay work in the mausoleum of Itmad ud-daulah*



*Musamman Burj, Agra Fort*

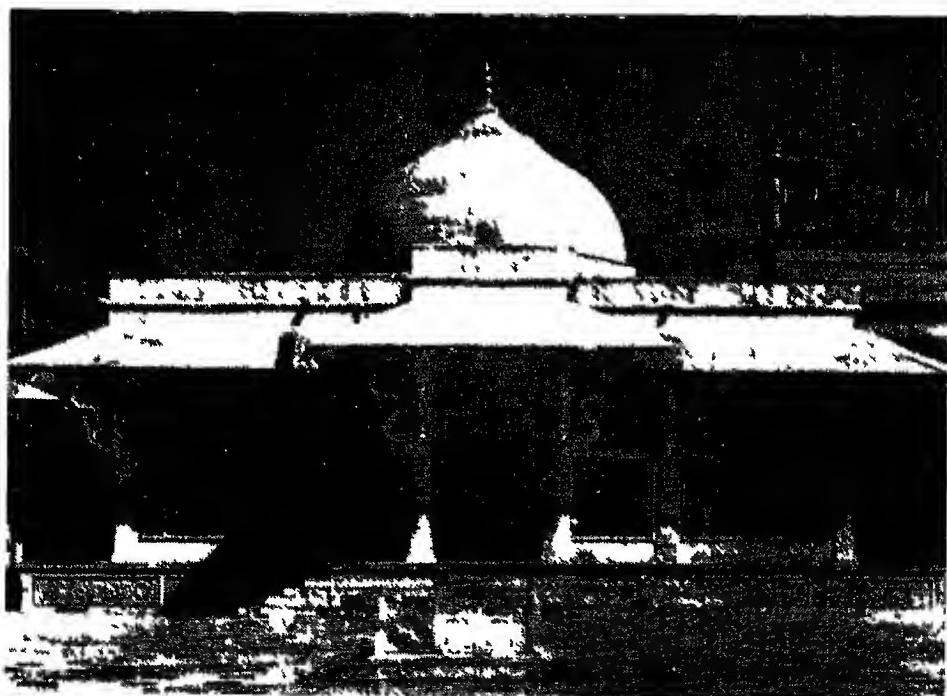


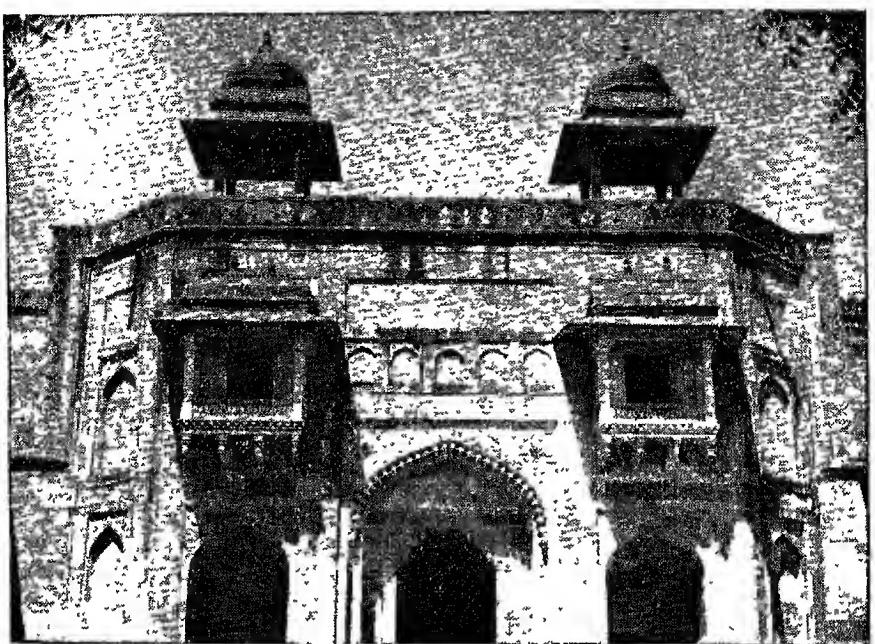
*Inlay work in Akbar's mausoleum*



*Main column of Diwane-Khas*

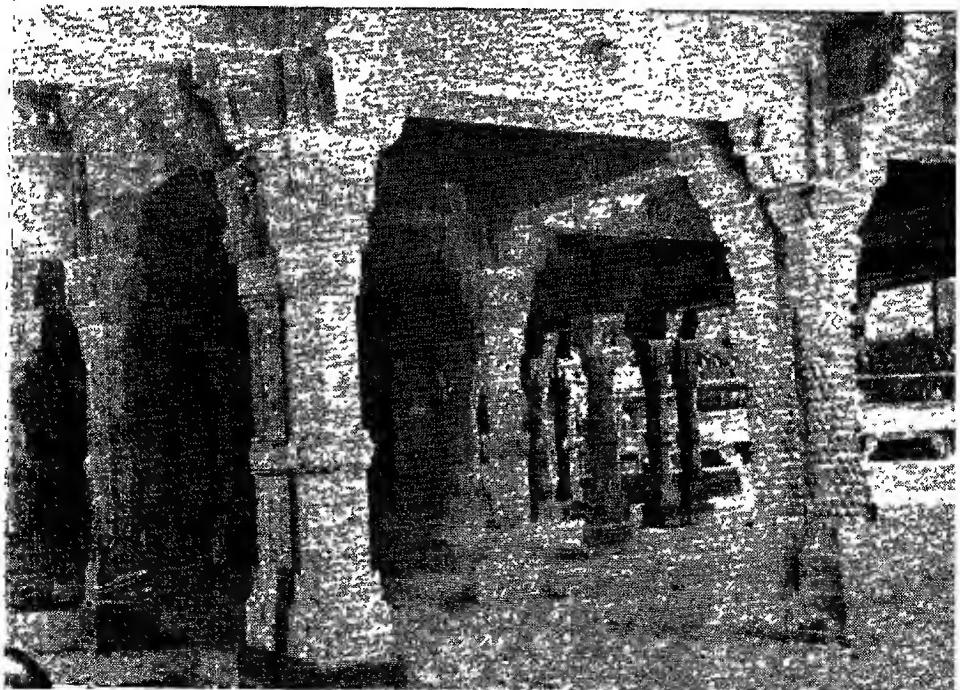
*Mausoleum of Shaikh Salim Chisti Fatchpur Sikri*





*Jodh Bai's Palace, Fatehpur Sikri*

*Panch Mahal, Fatehpur Sikri*



## THE ITMAD-UD-DAULAH

The lavishly ornate mausoleum of Itmad-ud-Daulah at Agra, built by the Empress Nurjahan, wife of the Mughal Emperor, Jahangir, for her own father, marks the supreme triumph of feminine influence on Mughal architecture. It may be ranked as the most elegant and ambitious artistic achievement of her own lifetime and of her husband's reign. Its architectural conception reflects to this day the aesthetic temperament of the time, the growing Persianized taste of the royal court and the love of art that characterized the queen consort. Nurjahan's creation rests in a class itself, for it represents a new trend—the transition from the Indianized art of Akbar's reign to the Persianized style of Shahjahan's time. As the link between the two, the tomb of Nurjahan's father mirrors a change of outlook between Akbar and his son, Jahangir. If Jahangir's reign witnessed a perceptible decline of the Indianizing policy of his father, much of it could be traced to the queen's personal influence over her reigning husband. The tomb of Itmad-ud-Daulah is thus one of the most significant of the Mughal monuments.

Mirza Ghias Beg, Nurjahan's father, whose surname was Itmad-ud-Daulah, "the Lord High Treasurer", was a Persian adventurer from Tehran. He rose to the rank of Wazir or Prime Minister under Jahangir. His death occurred in 1622 at Kangra, while he was on his way to Kashmir. His body was taken back to Agra and his daughter, Nurjahan, ordered the construction of a fitting tomb in the same year. At first, the Empress intended to erect a grand mausoleum of solid silver, but this idea had to be dropped, because she was warned by her advisers that silver, being costly, was bound to tempt thieves and marauders, while marble, being less expensive and more durable, would be both safer and more attractive. The tomb was completed in 1628. The Wazir and his wife, Nurjahan's parents, are buried in the main hall, while the other members of the Wazir's family lie in the four corner chambers.

NOTABLE FEATURES

The mausoleum, in spotless white marble from top to bottom, is beautifully placed on the east or left bank of the Yamuna. It stands like a gleaming pearl in a casket in the heart of a pretty and well laid-out Mughal garden inside a quadrangular walled enclosure, upon a raised platform, 149 ft. square and little over 3 ft. above the ground-level, with an attached tower or minaret at each corner. The building itself is square, and is about 70 ft. in diameter. The central structure is designed like a parallelogram measuring 22 ft. and 3 inches on each of its sides. The floor is of costly marble, and is tastefully decorated with marble mosaic. The sides of the main hall are also of marble, and are decorated with inlaid designs. The ceiling is most artistically ornamented with gold and silver, and coloured flowers. The mortal remains of Itmad-ud-Daulah and his wife are in the main hall, while the cenotaphs are placed in the upper chamber. The real tombs are built of a yellow variety of prophyry the elegant polish whereof is still striking.

On the sides there are inscriptions carved out in the Tughra style from the *Quran* and other holy texts. The cenotaphs in the upper pavilion are, however, of plain white marble, and they bear no inscriptions. The corner minarets are peculiarly noteworthy, for they are, in fact, a concrete expression of the idea which finally culminated in the detached minars of the Taj. The towers are octagonal at the base, and rounded at the top. They measure 40 ft. in height, each being surmounted by a pretty kiosk.

A notable feature of the structure is the graceful pavilion put up on the second storey. Inside this chamber stand the replicas of the real graves below. The pavilion is a square hall, enclosed by exquisite screens of the most elegant and delicate marble lattice work. These marble screens wrought like lace represent the progress of an art which reached its zenith in the reign of Shahjahan. By reason of their design and appearance, the marble tracery produced a pleasing effect, and lends a romantic charm to the entire building. The canopy-shaped roof of the pavilion has wide projecting caves, and rests on twelve

marble pillars. It is reminiscent of the Hindu influence which is so characteristic of the style of Akbar for Muslim tomb is usually covered by a dome. The absence of a dome in Itmad-ud-Daulah is thus of singular interest. It marks an interesting experimentation in the building art of the period. Persian minarets and a Hindu pavilion together make a novel combination indeed.

#### INLAY WORK

The inlay work in the mausoleum forms perhaps the happiest innovation in ornamentation. Both in quality and quantity, the *pietra-dura* decoration noticed in the building reminds one of Persian fresco painting and mosaic tiles. This inlay work has been ascribed by some authorities to European artists attached to the royal court. But, there is *not the least evidence of Italian or Florentine influence in the inlaid decoration*. The *pietra-dura* in Itmad-ud-Daulah, as in Mughal architecture in general, is Persian in character, and the idea of its European origin is far-fetched. The design is all Persian, and the details are reproduction or adaptation of the magnificent mosaic and painted tiles or pottery found in Persia. It is true that the introduction of inlaid decoration on such a large scale was a bold experiment but it was certainly inspired by the model of Persian art. If foreign workmen were employed, they were, as expressly stated by travellers, like Roe and Manucci, cutters of precious stones and enamellers. At the most, it could be conceded that some Italians may have brought with themselves stray pieces of Florentine inlay, and these might have been exhibited to the local craftsmen. If these Europeans had actually been employed to teach or superintend the local inlayers, they would not have failed or forgotten to leave some tangible evidence of their supervision. The suggestion of Italian influence in this connexion, therefore, must be rejected summarily.

The entire scheme of ornamentation, both inlaid and mosaic, is so skilfully and harmoniously executed in pattern and symbolism no less than in colour and material, that its effect leaves nothing to be desired. The whole edifice presents the appearance of a bejewelled casket the remarkable delicacy of which strikes attention of even a casual visitor.

Embellishment is so profuse and variegated that it seems to dominate the architectural conception. As such, it might be regarded as loud and gaudy at first sight, but let it not be forgotten that the ornamentation was expressly designed to suit the taste of a woman. The handsome patterning of the decorative details, as also the studied elaboration thereof, have only served to heighten the architectonic effect. The subdued and iridescent tints of the inlaid work have enhanced the beauty and appeal of the flawless white marble of which the mausoleum is built.

#### SPECIAL IMPORTANCE

The tomb of Itmad-ud-Daulah possesses an importance of its own in the annals of Mughal architecture. It constitutes a half-way house between the styles of Akbar and Shahjahan, and bears traces of a momentous phase in the evolution of the Mughal building art. It is an example of the development of the idea of a garden tomb which reaches perfection in the Taj. Its arrangement of lawn and parterres, pools and fountains, pathways and streamlets prefigures the patterning of the garden of the Taj. The use of white marble on so extensive a scale is also a new trend, and it anticipates the luxurious phase of Mughal architecture with which Shahjahan's reign is associated. The Persianized design and decoration of the tomb set a fashion which reached new heights in the succeeding years. Its *pitera-dura* inlay inspired the architect of the Taj. Its corner minarets did not fail to suggest a further development on the same lines in the design of the minarets of the Taj. Again, the location of the mausoleum by the side of the Yamuna must have formed the precedent for the similar placing of the Taj. The choice of a river bank site is suggestive of Hindu influence. This is all the more significant, because Akbar's tomb at Sikandra is at a distance from the Yamuna. Moreover, the tomb of Itmad-ud-Daulah emphasized and popularized the idea of concentrating on beauty and delicacy of execution, rather than on size and expanse of architectural creation. In other words, it marks a change-over from the epic to the lyric, from the virile to the effeminate, and from quantity to quality. Last, but not the least, the mausoleum gives an insight to the mind and outlook of its woman builder—her filial piety, her love of beauty, refinement of

temperament, no less than an epicurean's attachment and devotion to art.

#### FLAWS

It is easy to find flaws in the tomb. The carping critic would find fault with the ill-proportioned and stunted minarets, just as he could dub the excess of ornamentation as much too effeminate and inappropriate for a man's tomb. One might likewise regret the absence of a dome or object to the incongruous juxtaposition of a Hindu "Chhattri" and Muslim arches and minarets. One could again wish that the plinth and the superstructure of the edifice had been more elevated to make it statelier and more striking. Some of the architectural details too are open to criticism. For example, the arrangement of the chambers, or the placing of the staircase could have been better. All this is true. But, detractors who make such criticisms forget the limitations and handicaps under which a queen had to play the role of a builder. Jahangir's tastes lay in other directions, and Nurjahan, unaided by her royal consort, had to strike out a new line in the sphere of architecture. If Persian influence preponderated, it was hardly surprising, for the queen was born of Persian parents. And, it was only natural that the Persian-born Wazir should have been given his last resting place designed after the fashion of his own country. It is enough tribute to Nurjahan's genius that she built a monument which was destined to influence the architectural style of the age, and inspire the so-called "picture architecture" of Shahjahan's reign. Nurjahan's creation is, in temper and treatment, an unforgettable contribution of Mughal architecture.

## THE MUSAMMAN BURJ

One of the prettiest pavilions inside the fort at Agra, the Musamman Burj is an illustrious example of medieval craftsmanship, showing almost to perfection the decorative instinct, the beauty of proportions and the harmony of constructive design which characterize the architecture of the Great Mughals. It is rare to find even a Mughal building in which the effect is produced solely by the marvellous grace of the constructive details and the subtle rhythm of design. This pavilion is in many respects the most elegant building of its class, and its fine workmanship is worthy of the great Emperor Shahjahan who built it.

Erroneously termed "Jasmine Tower" from the word "sainan" or "yasaman" meaning jasmine, the Musamman Burj actually implies "Octagonal Tower", for "Musamman" signifies an octagon. It is finely situated on one of the projecting bastions on the river face where the fort takes a turn towards the east. The question as to who built this pavilion is a disputed one. Fergusson suggested that it was built by Jahangir and was meant to be the principal residence of his favourite wife, Nurjahan. This view is based on the assumption that the style of decoration looks earlier in date than that of Shahjahan's time and is supported by authorities like Havell and Keene. But this opinion is not corroborated by the contemporary evidence. According to the court chronicler of Shahjahan, Mulla Abdul Hamid Lahori, the author of *Badshahnama*, the building was re-erected under the orders of Shahjahan on the site formerly occupied by a marble building of Jahangir who himself had constructed it after demolishing a small house originally built by Akbar on this spot. It would appear, therefore, that all these three Mughal Emperors had chosen the site for constructing a pavilion and that it was the last among them, Shahjahan, who was responsible for the present building.

That this building may have been meant to be the abode of the chief queen is easy to understand, for its highly ornate

decoration and elegant design create an atmosphere congenial to feminine taste. The site, overlooking the river, was bound to be attractive to the royal occupant, as a fine view of the river and the sports held within the fort enclosure could be had and from this place, while the upper storey with its handsome dome cased in gilded copper is an appropriate place to enjoy the cool river breeze in the morning or in the moonlight after the evening. The Emperor too must have found the building a suitable retiring place after the rigours of daily work. One could watch the crowd gathered below the fort on the ground between the fort and the river, or enjoy a view of the fort garden inside the eastern enclosures. Jahangir is said to have used his own building, on this site for a novel purpose. A chain of bells was hung up under his orders, between the projecting bastion and the ground below for the use of suppliants who would come to seek royal justice. It may be stated in this connexion that a projecting "Burj" of this type on the east wall happened to be a common feature of the Mughal forts and is found also at Delhi and Lahore. The Musamman Burj at Delhi was the place where Shahjahan showed himself every morning at sunrise and observed the people doing him homage on the ground below. He also came there to watch the fight of animals and the execution of criminals.

The beautiful courtyard of the Musamman Burj, paved with marble, is on one side laid out in squares of black marble for the game of "Pachchisi" or Indian backgammon. This attractive "Pachchisi" board serves actually to conceal the drains running beneath it, for on close observation it would appear that its sides are not proportionate enough to justify the belief that it was used by the Emperor or his wife, for purposes of the game of "Pachchisi". The ignorant guides, however, insist on repeating the popular story that on this board the Emperor or the Empress used to play the game with slave girls as living counters. There is a raised platform on the north of the board. It is also laid out in square marble slabs, enclosed on all sides by pieces of porphyry. It is covered on the north and east by beautiful marble screens through the interstices of which the ladies could observe the sports in front of the fort walls.

The pavilion hall has a beautiful little fountain placed on a richly decorated cistern. Its flat roof now looking rather

drab was once painted in gold and other colours. The octagonal chamber adjacent to the hall is a pretty apartment which Mumtaz Mahal must have graced in her lifetime. It was here that the Emperor Shahjahan passed his last days of imprisonment and subsequently died in 1666. A superb distinct view of the Taj can be had from this place, and, tradition asserts, Shahjahan breathed his last with his eyes turned towards the mausoleum of his beloved queen. Here his faithful daughter, Jahanara, who shared his captivity for seven years, attended him on his death-bed, and as the darkness of night slowly crept in and obscured the view of the Taj, the disconsolate Emperor left the mortal world, beseeching divine mercy and with tearful words of farewell to his sorrowing daughter.

The death of Shahjahan and his funeral are narrated in detail by Mulla Muhammad Kazim in his Chronicle of Aurangzeb's reign, named the *Alamgirnama*. After the Emperor's death, Jahanara, entitled the Begam Sahib, sent for Khwaja Phul and the Fort Commandant, Radandaz Khan, and asked them to call in Sayyid Muhammad Qanauji and Qazi Qurban for the last rites prescribed by the Muslim law. After the necessary formalities were over and a large sum of money was distributed in charity in honour of the departed Emperor, the body was carried from the Musamman Burj to the neighbouring *Aiwan* to be bathed and shrouded. After the prescribed rites were duly performed, the body was placed inside a costly coffin made of sandal wood and conveyed by the passage connecting the Musamman Burj with the low gate beneath it, which, though usually closed, was now specially opened for the occasion. From this place, the body was taken out of the fort through the Sher Haji Gate, accompanied by a procession of official mourners and borne across the river Yamuna to its last resting place in the mortuary chamber of the Taj by the side of the grave of his beloved Mumtaz Mahal.

The building was once decorated with precious stones which are believed to have been looted by the Jats during the days when they occupied Agra after the battle of Panipat. Thanks to the interest taken by Lords Mayo and Northbrook, tolerable imitations were put up so as to convey some idea of its original magnificence.

*The Musamman Burj*

The Musamman Burj pavilion is a standing memorial to the refined, yet highly sensuous style of architecture that was introduced by Shahjahan, Emperor and builder, lover and artist. Full of his memories, the building symbolizes his elegance and taste. As the visitor stands on the marble courtyard, he can conjure up visions of luxury and splendour for which Shahjahan was justly renowned. He would gladly linger a while in the fretted recess of the hall, or by the side of the rose-water fountain and gaze with wondering eyes at the exquisite inlay work with dainty patterns in jasper, agate, jade, cornelian, lapis lazuli and blood-stone. In front appears the slow-moving and majestic Yamuna taking a bend to the east, and in the early hours of dawn or in the fading twilight of evening the view of the Taj and its minarets glimmering in the distant horizon like a fairy palace is a sight for which alone the Musamman Burj should be well worth a visit.

## SIKANDARA—THE UNFINISHED MASTERPIECE

No architectural relic of the Mughal Age produces a more lasting impression on the mind of the visitor than the unfinished mausoleum of Akbar at Sikandara, a village about five miles from Agra. This five-storeyed monument of red sandstone standing in the midst of a vast pleasure-ground surrounded by four high battlemented walls is one of the most extraordinary buildings of its kind in India and is totally unlike any Muslim tomb erected either before or since. The importance of this unparalleled tomb will be apparent from the fact that if it had not been incomplete, as it now unfortunately stands, and if it had been roofed with a central dome or canopy, it would have ranked next to the Taj among Indian tombs of this class. Notwithstanding its incomplete design, the tomb, designed in a truly Indian style, is pregnant with memories of the great statesman, Akbar, who was an Indian of Indians, who dreamed of a united India of Hindus and Musalmans. Both in its grandeur and in its incompleteness, the noble structure is an eloquent commentary on Akbar's mind and his taste for architecture.

The gardens which enclose the mausoleum extend to about 150 acres and are surrounded by walls 25 ft. high with four fine sandstone gateways. The main gate is peculiar among Mughal gateways, being dominated by four slender, marble minarets. The chief gateway standing on the west side bears a Persian inscription recording the date of its completion by the Emperor Jahangir in the seventh year of his reign, or A.D. 1613. It is picturesquely decorated with vigorous and artistic mosaic patterns which lend an air of enchantment to this lonely garden tomb. Over the gateway is the Naubat Khana, an arcaded chamber with a balcony where the kettle-drums were beaten at dawn, and again at one watch after sunrise in honour of the dead.

### A CONTROVERSY

It seems that the mausoleum was begun by Akbar himself, though historians are not unanimous on the point as to

when exactly and by whom the tomb was begun. Authorities like E. W. Smith, Fergusson, Keene and Havell support the view that it was begun by Akbar in his own lifetime. That Akbar is the author of the original design is apparent from the testimony of two contemporary European travellers, William Finch and William Hawkins. We learn from Finch who visited the tomb in 1611 that the construction had actually begun ten years prior to his visit and that only one of the gateways had been completed at the time of his visit. He writes, "The Tomb was not finished at my departure, but lay in manner of a coffin, covered with a white sheet, interwrought, with gold and flowers". He further states that the tomb was to be "inarched over with the most curious white and speckled marble, to be ceiled all within with pure sheet gold richly inwrought". It is only necessary to add that such a canopy is just what is needed by artistic considerations to give the building the impression of a completed idea.

Hawkins visited the tomb in the same year. He writes "The Sepulchre may be counted one of the rarest monuments of the world. It hath been then fourteen years a building and it is thought it will not be finished these seven years more, including gates and walls, and other needful things, for the beautifying and setting of it forth." This statement further corroborates the view that the actual construction must have been begun during Akbar's own lifetime.

#### ASSOCIATED WITH JAHANGIR

There is another view taken by Dr. Fuehrer who held that the mausoleum was really the work of Jahangir. The latter has narrated in his memoirs that on his first visit to the tomb after his accession he was dissatisfied with the design which had been introduced by the architects, and he ordered them to lay the foundations again in agreement with men of experience, in several places, on a settled plan. Jahangir's statement shows, firstly, that the construction was started during the rebellion of Khusru, i.e. after Akbar's death, secondly, that the previous design was rejected by him, and thirdly, another design was prepared in accordance with his desire. It may be argued that if Akbar himself had started his tomb, Jahangir would have mentioned this fact in his memoirs. His silence on this point is highly significant.

Again, the story of the European travellers is hardly credible, for they give different versions regarding the commencement of the construction, although they visited the tomb in the same year. They do not also clearly state that the tomb was started by Akbar himself. What they say is hardly more than bazar gossip which they jotted down in their old age when their memory too was half-obliterated.

There is an inscription on the south gateway, which states, "In the seventh year of the august accession of Jahangir, corresponding to A. H. 1021, after seven years of work attained completion". This, however, shows that the work had been begun in the very first year of Jahangir's reign and was completed in the seventh year after seven years of construction. Is it likely that the use of the word "completed" in the inscription misled most authorities into believing that Jahangir may not have begun it? However, the question remains a subject of controversy. The probabilities are that Akbar may have commenced the construction of the tomb.

#### THE DESIGN

The design of the building is pyramidal, each storey being smaller than the lower one. Fergusson held that the building was designed after a Buddhist "Vihara" (monastery). Vincent Smith, however, doubted if a Buddhist "Vihara" could have existed in those days. According to him, the design is Cambodian and may have been borrowed from some Cambodian craftsmen. The entrance to the interior chamber of the tomb is through the central archway of the ground floor which opens into a vestibule decorated with stucco work and frescoed in blue and gold. The ornamentation arrests the gaze of the wondering visitor and one likes to linger at the porch, in spite of the temptation to hurry onwards to the cenotaph inside. A dimly lighted passage leads the visitor into the valued chamber which contains the sepulchre of white marble. The chamber must have been beautifully coloured, but is now quite drab and whitewashed. Tradition says that the Jats looted the tomb during the decline of the Mughal Empire in the eighteenth century, and carried away, besides gold and jewels, the Emperor's armour, clothes and books which are said to have been originally placed beside the sarcophagus. There is no

## *Sikandara—The Unfinished Masterpiece*

doubt that the tomb was ruthlessly desecrated, though the story of desecration would sound rather strange, for we are told by the European travellers that the tomb was venerated not only by the Muslims, but also by the Hindus who regarded Akbar as a great saint.

### DECORATIONS

Narrow staircases lead to the upper terraces. The top storey is the most interesting part of the building. Its fretted marble trellised walls are remarkable for their delicate design, each panel being fashioned out of an entire piece of marble. The Cenotaph, hewn out of a solid block of white marble, stands in the centre of the tessellated marble pavement and is decorated with floral ornamentation. The words, "*Allaho Akbar, Jalla Jalalahu*" are inscribed in the panels. These sentences formed the formula of Akbar's "Divine Faith". At the north end, stands a marble pedestal meant to hold the lamp (and "not" the Koh-i-noor diamond, as tradition wrongly asserts).

The inscriptions in Nastaliq characters on the cloisters of the top-most storey are most interesting. A few lines which relate to the Emperor Akbar may be reproduced here :

"A King who in his age lives in this manner is indeed the shadow of God. He adorned the world with his justice and equity and the hearts of the people of the world became glad through him. In the eyes of wise men of sense, this perishable world is a "Sarai". Do not expect to find kindness in fate, for in the end fate shows kindness to none. Fate is spiteful. Fate's want of love led Shah Akbar to eternal life."

Being one of the earliest monuments of Jahangir's reign, Akbar's mausoleum symbolises the change-over from the Hindu taste of Akbar to the Persian taste of his son. The structural design shows unmistakable Hindu influence, though the decoration is of the Muslim style. The composite character of the stately building accurately mirrors the complex personality of the great statesman who sleeps within it. Like Akbar's noble dream, his tomb stands in its unfulfilled glory, for, in the words of the inscription quoted above, "*Fate is spiteful*".

## INDIA'S BIGGEST VICTORY GATEWAY

The most spectacular victory gateway in India and one of the loftiest in the whole world, the Baland Darwaza at Fatehpur-Sikri, is one of the most colossal artistic creations of medieval India. In the entire range of Indian art there is no other gateway which could excel this either in the impressive beauty of dimensions, grandeur of appeal or artistry of engineering planning. Akbar's victory gate still reflects the magnificence of the power and splendour of its great imperial builder. Such is the towering height and size of this grand entrance that it forms a titanic watch tower which dominates the neighbouring landscape like a cyclopean giant, keeping guard over a soaring city of the Arabian Nights.

### DATE OF COMPLETION

When exactly was this gateway completed ? The matter has been a subject of controversy. A host of writers have given currency to the belief that this great entrance was completed in the year A. H. 1010 or A. D. 1601-2. This opinion is based on the inscription on its eastern side, which is dated A. H. 1010, the year which marked the royal builder's conquest of Khandesh and the capitulation of the great fort of Asirgarh. That this popular belief is entirely unfounded will be apparent from the following facts :

The inscription in question is as follows : "His Majesty, King of Kings, of celestial abode, the Shadow of God, Jalalud-din Muhammad Akbar Badshah, having reduced the territory of the Deccan and Dandes, formerly known as Khandesh, in the 46th Ilahi year, corresponding to A. H. 1010, arrived at Fatehpur-Sikri and then proceeded to Agra". But this inscription does not mention a word about the construction of this gateway. Is this omission not striking and significant ? This, therefore, must be regarded as commemorative of a flying visit to this place, paid by Akbar, while returning from his triumphant expedition in the Deccan. Besides, Akbar

ceased to live in Sikri after 1585, when he left this capital for the north. Even if he had chosen to build this lofty structure in 1601-2, he could have hardly done so, for by now Fatchpur-Sikri had been in fact abandoned as the royal headquarters for about sixteen years and was now in a state of semi-ruin and disrepair. Why should the builder have undertaken in such circumstances and in semi-desert city the construction of a monument of such eminence and size, which must have taken at least a year or even more to complete?

What forms the most decisive evidence is a Persian chronogram which supplied the clue to the actual date of the erection of the Baland Darwaza. This interesting chronogram is as follows : (Rashk-i-Taq-i-Siphir-i-Baland). This is available in *Mistahut-Tawarikh* and is anonymous. It means literally "the curvy of the arch of the lofty firmament". According to the usual rules of notation, the date A.H. 983, (A.D. 1575-6) is derived from the four words "rashk-i-taq-i-siphir-i-baland". There is no reason to doubt the genuineness of the aforesaid chronogram. The inscription already cited above refers only to Akbar's brief halt at Sikri after his victory in the south. But, many scholars, including even E. W. Smith, were evidently misled by the inscription on the east side. As a matter of fact, this chronogram was cited by Beale and Blochmann in the proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal in 1874. Apparently, it had been forgotten, when later writers like Smith were misguided by the inscription.

#### PURPOSE OF GATEWAY

There has been a lot of ingenious speculation about the true purpose of the Lofty Gateway. It was looked upon as a significant warning to the Rajputs near at hand. It was likewise interpreted as a warning to all enemy powers in and outside India. It was believed to have been a direct rebuke from the Emperor to his intractable son, Salim. Those who were misled by the aforesaid inscription naturally thought that the gateway represents the great victory in Khandesh. The casual visitor still regards the portal as a fitting entrance to the famous Jami mosque at Sikri.

In fact, however, all such notions are either fanciful or simply absurd. It is too much to think that Akbar needed some gateway at Sikri to terrorize any enemy or rival or even

rebel, much less his own son. Akbar was not in the habit of wasting his money in futile or bombastic ostentation either. Again it is generally not known to the hurried sight-seer that the Baland Darwaza was not meant to be just an entrance to the mosque which had already been built in A.H. 979 or A.D. 1571-2, as is clearly shown in the inscription on the main arch. It is highly unlikely that the great mosque could have been left without a proper gateway on the south for three or four years. It is, therefore, clear that there must have been in the beginning a southern portal in a style, conforming to that of the northern gateway. This must have been demolished in about 1575 to be replaced by the present lofty gateway. This is in fact a separate building in itself, and, as it stands, overshadows the mosque itself, being disproportionate to the size of the latter, and being wholly out of keeping with the original design.

#### MONUMENT OF VICTORY

The Baland Darwaza is, however, a real monument of victory. A structure of this kind could not have been meaningless after all. But, what victory this commemorates was generally lost sight of. The Lofty Portal is a grand reminder of Akbar's resounding victory in Gujarat—a real landmark in Akbar's whole career. The year A.H. 984, or A.D. 1575-6 was also marked by Akbar's great victory in Bengal. Having embarked on his ambitious march to Bengal in 1574, Akbar had a decisive victory over Daud Khan of Bengal in 1575. The latter, however, rebelled, and was eventually killed in July, 1576. Thus, it is appropriate that the Baland Darwaza stands to commemorate the reduction of both the eastern and western enemies of the Empire, though primarily it might be a memorial of the conquest of Gujarat, a mighty achievement in itself, and a turning point in Akbar's career as conqueror.

One of the loftiest gateways in the world, the Baland Darwaza is, according to Fergusson, "The finest in India". Its imposing outlook is heightened by the towering ridge of Sikri over which it stands. Over the ridge itself, it towers about 134 ft. high from the pavement of the main entrance. It stands 176 ft. high from the ground-level below. The height of the gate is so stately that it overshadows everything around, and one can have distant glimpses of the Taj at

## *India's Biggest Victory Gateway*

Agra and of the fort at Bharatpur on a clear and cloudless day. A flight of 120 steps leads to the top which gives the on-looker a wonderful view of Sikri and around.

Its exterior is modelled on the design of a semi-octagon, projecting 33 ft. from the main wall of the mosque. There are three entrances beautifully recessed in the huge vaulted enclosure, formed by the semi-octagon. The central entrance is the biggest among the three, and is popularly designated the Nal Darwaza or horse-shoe gate from the votive offerings of horse-shoes thickly nailed on the massive doors by people who believe that their sick animals would be set right by the merciful grace of the presiding saint of Sikri, Shaikh Salim Chishti. Tradition asserts that these horse-shoes, now all of iron, used to be of silver too in bygone days.

### THE DESIGN

The design of the building is simply grand, and it justly marks one of the most graceful and sublime architectural and engineering achievements in India. E. B. Havell rightly emphasizes the gateway as one of the memorable examples of perfect co-ordination between the structural and the decorative elements so essential for the best forms of architecture. Essentially, the design is Persian, but on the whole the place is Indian in many respects. The idea of a recessed gateway, lofty from the outside and receding in the interior into a lower portal, is Persian undoubtedly and has been executed in the correct manner of affording a huge portal an entrance at all in proportion to its size. The manner in which this has been done has received the highest praise from authorities like Fergusson. But, the total effect of the building is materially a result of the originality and ingenuity of the Indian craftsman who, in preference to the multi-coloured tile inlay of the Persian style, used stone, bricks and plaster to create a more virile and sober appearance. The pendentives with intersecting arches are again in Persian style, yet the fine lintels and brackets are typically Indian. Similarly, the inlaid patterns are arabesque in style, but the spandrels of the arches are decorated with the customary lotus motif of India.

Among other details, mention must be made of the decorated side walls with patterns in marble and in red sandstone, the jambs of the archway with Quranic inscriptions, the three

gates, the *jali* work on the arcades, the series of beautiful kiosks on the summit, constituting a worthy ornament to the portal, and, last but not the least, the fine and graceful *guldastas* or polygonal shafts capped by flower-tops on the outer angles of the abutments.

A beautiful Arabic inscription of Quranic text carved in "Naskh" style runs all along the archway at the commencement of which the writer's name, Husain, son of Ahmad Chishti, a Khalifa of the saint, Shaikh Salim, occurs in bold relief. But the most memorable inscription here on the right side of the entrance is a saying popularly ascribed to Jesus Christ. These famous words are as follows :

"Saith Jesus (upon whom be peace), the world is a bridge ; therefore pass over it, and build not on it."

This so-called saying of Christ in the Baland Darwaza is highly significant. In fact, however, the ascription of this saying to Christ is incorrect. The real source of this is the "*Kamil*" of Mubarrad where it is ascribed to Hasan of Basrah (A. H. 110), a famous Muslim saint. He used to say : "The world is a bridge over which you pass, but which you do not make a dwelling". The saint, al-Hasan al-Basri, was an ascetic, and is believed to have taken some of his ideas from Christianity. It is thus not unlikely that the saying of al-Hasan embodies a similar idea attributed to Christ and popularized by Christian monks.

#### STORY OF THE INSCRIPTION

How this inscription was put up is an interesting story which ought to find a mention here. The artist who wrote it was the famous Mir Muhammad Masum, chronicler, poet and official in those days. He was specially celebrated as a great calligraphist and also as composer of inscriptions. His poetical inscriptions were to be seen in buildings from India even to Persia. Besides the mosque at Sikri, his inscriptions adorn the portal of the fort of Agra, the fort of Mandu and various other buildings. He used to accompany Akbar on his expeditions so as to be ready at hand to be able to put up a fitting inscription at the desired places. He went

to the Deccan also, and is known to have written the inscription on the front wall of the main mosque at Asirgarh. It is certain that he must have seen the mosques at Burhanpur, the Faruqi capital. Only at a distance of a few miles from Asirgarh, Burhanpur was for sometime the headquarters of the Imperial Army. Therefore, the Mir must have inspected the Faruqi inscriptions there. And, it is hardly surprising that the so-called Jesus' saying was derived by him from an inscription at Burhanpur on Adil Shah's tomb. The said inscription is as follows :

*"Look upon the people of the tombs, and be admonished, ye men of insight ;*

*For as much as it is said : 'Is the heedlessness of the living greater, or the sorrow of the dead' ?*

*Jesus (on him be peace) said : 'The world is a bridge ; therefore pass over it, but do not build on it.'"*

How the so-called Jesus' saying reached the Faruqi capital of Burhanpur is not known. It can be definitely traced back to Hasan of Basra, who died in A. D. 728-9. Probably, it reached him from Christian monks. Whether Jesus had actually said this cannot now be verified, because the Gospels do not preserve all the sayings of Jesus, and many obviously were not recorded, although they must have been current. That Akbar allowed an inscription ascertained to Jesus illustrates a truly liberal outlook on his part.

#### **ANOTHER INSCRIPTION**

On the left side of the door-way runs another Sufistic inscription :

*"He that standeth up in prayer, and his heart is not in it, does not draw nigh to God, but remaineth far from Him. The best possession is what thou givest in the name of God ; thy best traffic is selling this world for the next, and this will benefit thee ; piety is a world in which there is no account for anything."*

These philosophic sermons in stone carving serve to reveal the edlectic outlook and philosophical temper of Akbar

more clearly and forcefully than any eulogy of the court chronicler or panegyrist could do. There is no doubt that the reproduction of passages like these on a victory gate is a proof of the introspective mind of the great Emperor. Material success did not either blind him, or temporal successes could make him forget the world of piety. That he was free from bigotry is absolutely proved from these inscriptions. That Akbar took the role of a teacher of Sufistic thought at the zenith of his power and at the end of his long life of success, reminds us of the piety of the great Emperor, Asoka.

The Baland Darwaza is an architectural feat of great magnitude. If it dwarfs the mosque attached to it, it was no fault of Akbar. It was enough that the gateway from the inside is co-ordinated with the general outlook of the mosque courtyard. Once you are inside the mosque, your eyes will turn to the sacred spot, for the inner side of the gate is cleverly toned down to the desired extent. When you look at the gate from the outside, this itself appears to be the most important piece. It is a monument in itself. It is India's victory gate of the sixteenth century, symbolic of the glory that was Akbar's.

## SHAikh SALIM CHISHTI'S TOMB

The far-famed tomb of Shaikh Salim Chishti at Fatehpur-Sikri is one of the finest pieces of Mughal architecture, and is one of the most sacred of all the Muslim architectural monuments of medieval India. The elegance of material combined with the beauty of design, and the fact that it is the last resting place of the most honoured saint of the Mughal Age have combined to make it one of the most impressive and historic edifices of medieval times.

The modern mind marvels at the chaste and elegant artistry and austere sublimity of this building which stands to this day a source of endless admiration and wonder to visitors and pilgrims alike. Looking at this superb monument with the sun sinking in shades of saffron and gold behind the tall walls of the Jami mosque, there can hardly be any who will not feel spell-bound and deeply moved. In Akbar's deserted city of Fatehpur-Sikri this marble tomb is indeed the prettiest building reminiscent of the glories of Mughal art.

### SHAikh SALIM CHISHTI

Shaik Salim Chishti who was a descendant of Shaikh Fariduddin Ganj-Shakar holds the most illustrious place among the Muslim saints of Akbar's reign, and is still revered by both Hindus and Muslims alike for his spiritual eminence and extraordinary piety. He was born at Sikri in A. H. 884 (A.D. 1479-80) and, after his spiritual initiation at the hands of Khwaja Ibrahim, a well-known scholar and philosopher of that age, and repeated and prolonged pilgrimages to Arabia and neighbouring lands, he made Sikri his permanent abode. In due course, remarkable stories of his godliness and miraculous powers reached Akbar who visited the saint and sought his blessings to have a son and heir. The saint advised the king to come and reside at Sikri. The king did so, and here within a year was born

a son who was named Salim after the saint. Next year another prince, Murad, was born under the shelter of the saint.

Jahangir who narrates all these circumstances in his well-known autobiography, says : "My revered father, regarding the village of Sikri, my birth-place, as fortunate to himself, made it his capital, and in the course of fourteen or fifteen years the hills and deserts, which abounded in beasts of prey, became converted into a magnificent city, comprising numerous gardens, elegant edifices and pavilions, and other places of great attraction and beauty. After the conquest of Gujarat, the village was named Fatehpur-Sikri."

The Shaikh died in A.H. 979 (A.D. 1572), and his royal devotee built a splendid mausoleum in his honour inside the courtyard of the Jami Masjid. The monument had to be small in size, for the mosque must not appear cramped or dwarfed, and the maximum space in the courtyard must of course be left for the use of those who come for their prayer. It is erected on an inlaid marble platform, about 59 ft. square and 3 ft. high. Inside is the cenotaph which is surrounded by a picturesque verandah enclosed on all sides by immaculate screens of marble carved in such artistic and gorgeous style as to create the impression of ornamental lace. These fretwork marble screens, some of which happen to be masterpieces of art, are one of the most aesthetic types of perforated marble work of Mughal India, and one cannot help wondering how the craftsmen worked up huge slabs of stone into such symmetrical patterns. The entire building faced with white marble is a veritable gem studded in the resplendent mosque of Sikri.

#### **INTERIOR OF THE BUILDING**

The cenotaph stands at the centre of the marble floor, beneath an exquisite wooden canopy resting on fine octagonal pillars inlaid with delicate mother-of-pearl work. The actual mortal remains, it may be added, lie in a closed vault exactly beneath the cenotaph. The inlay work on the pillars is exceedingly enchanting, and has the appearance of radiant damask-work. The little bits of mother-of-pearl and ebony are fixed to the wooden framing by shellac and

### *Shaikh Salim Chishti's Tomb*

pins of brass and copper. Their bewitching glow in the subdued light of the chamber captivated the eyes of even the hurried visitors. The whole interior is richly painted in colour and the floral ornamentation on the sides of the windows is a fine illustration of Mughal decoration. The tints are rich and deep, and create a dream-like effect. The floor of the chamber and a part of that of the entrance are inlaid in sparkling mosaics in marbles obtained from Rajputana.

Three windows decorated with perforated geometrical tracery light the chamber, and both in the bars of these windows and in the interstices of the marble screens hang bits of coloured threads and shreds of cloth. They are placed there by pilgrims who believe that any wish they make in the tomb will be fulfilled. More often than not, these are tied there by women, both Hindu and Muslim, as tokens of the vow that, if favoured with an offspring, they would come back to make a suitable offering to the shrine. The exterior walls of the chamber are studded with pilasters and panels inscribed in embossed gilded characters with verses from the *Quran*. The architraves around the porch door are similarly decorated with scrolls and texts from the *Quran*.

#### SERPENTINE STRUTS

One of the most interesting features of the structural design is the peculiar serpentine struts which support the eaves along the top of the porch and the facades of the building. These struts lend an air of mystery to the shrine and give it the appearance of a Jain temple. Each serpentine strut is fashioned out of one solid block of white marble and is put up more as a decorative motif than as an architectural necessity. In fact, structurally the struts are apparently weak and therefore reinforced by additional stays running through the space between the curves. The intervening portion between these curves and stays are spanned by delicately carved tracery for purposes of decoration and possibly for concealing from observant eyes the architectural weakness of the struts. The tracery is of the geometrical pattern, though in a few cases the design is purely floral.

A part of the north-east corner of the enclosed perambulatory around the chamber is decorated with a

beautiful inlaid border to distinguish the place where the great saint generally sat for his prayers long before the tomb was constructed. This spot is considered to be particularly holy and no visitor would dare sit here except the *Sajjada-nashin* who alone enjoys the privilege of being seated here during the *Urs*.

The Shaikh is revered to this day by all classes of people, and during the *Urs*, or the anniversary of his death, commencing on the 20th of Ramzan, thousands of pilgrims from all parts of India gather at the shrine to offer their devout supplications to the departed saint. Though supplications are generally made at the tomb itself, many people fix up iron shoes on the doors behind the Baland Darwaza when they pray for the cure of their pet animals. In consequence, one can see there many horse and cattle shoes contributed by the rich and poor alike. Evidently, the saint's influence is considered to be beneficent and all-powerful by his admirers of all communities.

#### INSCRIPTIONS

Over the top of the main door there are inscribed in gilded letters beautiful passages recording the eulogies of the saint and his death in A. H. 979 (A. D. 1572). These inscriptions are of the utmost significance as a clue to an understanding of the religious and mystical background of Islam and Sufism in India of those days.

A few of these beautiful lines may be reproduced here :

"Shaikh, the aid to the faith and the guide to the path ;

Who is a Taifur and Junaid in excellence and nearness to God ;

Illumined by him is the candle of the Chishti family ;  
To Farid Ganj-i-Shakar he was the most distinguished descendant.

Do not be squint-eyed. Efface thyself for then thou wilt submit in God.

The year of the Shaikh's death is well-known throughout the world."



### *Shaikh Salim Chishti's Tomb*

"Allah says—those who have believed and done  
virtuous acts,

The gardens of paradise shall be their meed,

Wherein shall they dwell for ever and seek not to  
leave them.

\* \* \* \* \*

"O my Allah, thou art the *Salam*; from thee is the  
*Salam* and it returns to thee.

Greet us, O Lord with the *Salam*.

Admit us now, our preserver, to the abode of the  
*Salam*.

The Lord of Majesty and beneficence, thou art raised  
and exalted."

#### A MASTERPIECE

The tomb was built after the saint's death under the supervision of his distinguished grandson, Nawab Qutbuddin Khan Kokaltash, who was the foster brother of Emperor Jahangir, and was Governor of Bengal until his assassination at Burdwan by Sher Afghan, the first husband of Nurjahan, in 1607.

The original structure of the mausoleum as constructed by the saint's grandson was of ordinary stone covered with white marble with the exception of the dome which was simply plastered over. It was sometime after the mutiny that the dome was faced with marble under the order and under the supervision of the Collector of Agra. The cost was met from the *Dargah* funds.

The tomb is all-in-all a grand masterpiece of Mughal architecture. That the beauty of its design, and perfection of its ornamentation, earned for it the highest eulogies is hardly surprising. Its chronogram itself is justly based on the eloquent phrase, "Duplicate of Paradise" (*Jannat-e-Sani*). The reference to Paradise was the highest tribute that could be paid to an earthly abode. Shaikh Salim Chishti's tomb is doubtless the *magnum opus* of the architecture of Akbar's city of Fatehpur-Sikri.

## THE DIWAN-I-KHAS

In the entire range of Mughal architecture, there is no parallel to Akbar's lotus-pillared Diwan-i-Khas or Hall of Audience at Sikri which is doubtless the most distinctive building symbolizing a truly national Indian style of virile, exuberant and imaginative architecture that this great Mughal Emperor introduced during his reign in his new capital at Sikri and elsewhere.

Stately and solemn stands this remarkable red sandstone building today in the now-deserted city of Sikri, a mute witness to the epic splendours of a bygone age ; and it needs little exercise of imagination to visualize its inner chamber glowing with gorgeous tapestries and resounding with dignified pomp characteristic of the cabinet hall of a great statesman who was undoubtedly the grandest monarch of his time. Here in the hall of private audience Akbar sat cross-legged in the centre on the elevated platform to meet his courtiers and transact all important business of the State. This building is thus deeply vibrant with memories of the mighty Mughal Emperor, and may be ranked among the most original monuments of the Mughal Age.

### UNIQUE BUILDING

Overlooking the great palace quadrangle on which is to be seen the "Pachchisi" (Indian backgammon) board where, as is usually, though wrongly, believed, Akbar sat beneath an imposing canopy of silk along with chosen friends to enjoy the game played with slave-girls as living chessmen, the Diwan-i-Khas is located in the midst of an open courtyard adjoining the great Diwan-i-Am. An entrance towards the north-west side of the cloisters of the Diwan-i-Am leads to this unique building, and it is this very passage which was used by the people who came to see the Mughal Emperor. The hall of private audience, unlike the spacious Diwan-i-Am, was used by the Emperor exclusively for the

### *The Diwan-i-Khas*

reception of ambassadors, the *Umaras* and nobles of the highest rank for the transaction of the most important business of State. The *Umaras* had to present themselves here almost every morning and evening, and the place was thus, strictly speaking, a private council chamber. While the adjacent Diwan-i-Am is an extensive building, being the public audience hall, this building is comparatively very small for, evidently, the Mughal Emperor did not like over-crowding in a place where confidential business was to be transacted. Akbar who was one of the most efficient among the rulers of his day, would not tolerate the idea of turning his private council chamber into a grand *darbar* hall. His Diwan-i-Khas is thus in no way similar to the large and magnificent halls of private audience that the extravagant Shahjahan built at Agra or Delhi. In this place more than any other, one is enabled to visualize and grasp the real greatness of Akbar as a really businesslike administrator.

The building is in many respects unparalleled in design. The intrinsic charm rests neither on costly material nor on spectacular dimensions, but arises from the ingenious way in which the whole edifice has been planned. Viewed from the outside it would easily be mistaken for a lofty double-storeyed structure, yet actually it consists of a single-vaulted chamber surrounded half-way up by a simple though artistic gallery. The size of the building is hardly imposing, for the audience chamber is only 28 ft. square. Its architectural interest is therefore unique and its beauty is discernible in the superb conception and graceful execution of a brilliant Hindu symbolism in a Saracenic setting. The architect was evidently called upon to plan a square, detached chamber of a composite Indo-Muslim design in a way that would truly reflect the dignified national style which Akbar had made his own. There is no denying the fact that the architect has been able to execute his task with consummate skill and remarkable success.

### THE DECORATED COLUMN

The most romantic feature of this building is the highly decorated column supporting a gigantic lotus-shaped bracket gallery which stands in the centre of the square

tessellated hall-floor. This wonderful pillar, the like of which is not to be found in any other medieval Indian monument, supports four branches of artistically constructed causeway lined on two of its sides by low and elegant screened railings radiating from the top of the capital to the four corners of the audience hall. This exquisite royal gallery placed over a colossal lotus-shaped bracketed pillar may be easily reckoned as the most brilliant and romantic idea in Mughal architecture of Akbar's time. One cannot help feeling here that the architect chose to adapt to the new environment of a Mughal palace the ancient Hindu symbolism of Brahma or Vishnu sitting on a spreading lotus over the sea of the Universe. Thus, Akbar's royal seat symbolizes an ancient Indian conception, and as such is a fitting sanctuary for an Emperor who by virtue of his truly amazing tolerance and breadth of vision was a statesman far in advance of his age.

Tradition asserts that the chief ministers were required to stand at the four corners of the royal gallery, while the *Umaras* and other notables admitted to the audience gathered all round the central column on the floor beneath. Akbar took his seat on the circular space over the lotus-pillar, and was thus conveniently placed for the purpose of conferring with his ministers and visitors alike. The gallery is reached by two narrow staircases which also lead up to the roof from the north-east and south-east corners. A narrow balcony encircles the outer and inner sides of the building on the same level as the railed branches radiating from the royal platform.

The octagonal pillar supporting the bracket gallery is purely Hindu in design, but it is richly carved and ornamented both on the shaft and the pedestal in a style which is undoubtedly Muslim in character. The patterns of decorations are mainly geometrical and altogether the column marks the glory of the finely blended Indo-Muslim style of that period when Mughal architecture in India reached its epic age of art and simplicity. It is hardly an exaggeration to state that there is no relic like this in the domain of Medieval Art which could stand comparison with this in point of design, decoration or symbolism. No praise can be too great for it, as it is the only masterpiece of its

### *The Diwan-i-Khas*

kind ever repeated during or after its builder's reign. It stands as a vivid memorial to a ruler who appreciated bold originality in design regardless of considerations for formal convention or religious taboo.

The exterior of the Diwan-i-Khas is in keeping with the spirit of its interior. Simple, yet elegant, the outer structure creates the impression of a Hindu temple building. The dimensions of the edifice harmonize with the general plan of the surrounding area, and one is compelled to admire the artistry with which the designer has handled a complex idea. There is a magnificent doorway in the centre of each facade, and on both sides of each doorway there are beautiful windows decorated with perforated tracery. An attractive passage resting on heavy brackets and surrounded by trellis work marks off each facade into an upper and lower storey. Small and shapely kiosks placed over four corners of the building produce a pleasing effect and heighten the beauty of the entire structure.

#### AKBAR'S STYLE

Being one of the best examples of Akbar's style, the Diwan-i-Khas at Sikri supplies valuable clues to an understanding of the ruler's ideas and ideals. Akbar's style marks a clear reaction against the Persianization of Muslim style in India, and barring the foreign influence visible in surface decoration, his style is Hindu both in structure and general conception. It is robust and imaginative and yet it is free from the sensuous elegance of Shahjahan's style. There is nothing effeminate about Akbar's style, and his buildings give the impression of a bold warrior and man of action. There is a studied avoidance of the excessive refinement that came over the Mughal style in Shahjahan's time, aptly called the lyric age, as distinct from the epic age of Medieval Architecture. Akbar's style is chaste, simple and economical, and his red sandstone structures, though not luxurious and costly like those of Shahjahan are no less artistic and impressive. This shows Akbar's dislike of needless extravagance at the expense of the sweated millions.

The distinguishing feature of Akbar's style was its Indian or Hindu character. Akbar's adoption of Indian

style of construction exhibits him as a true empire-builder with a wide tolerance and non-communal statesmanship. He freely allowed the Hindu system of horizontal courses and brackets in preference to the true radiating arches which characterize the Muslim system of construction. In short, the spirit of tolerance and predilection for Indian ideas that marked the character of Akbar are fully traceable in his style. Akbar was an Indian of Indians, and his Diwan-i-Khas at Sikri is the petrification of his unequalled love of the country's indigenous traditions of art and architecture.

It is well-known that Akbar built a council hall called the Ibadat Khana at Sikri where the wise men of all religions gathered for discussions. This building has not yet been conclusively identified. Mr. Keene, in his *Handbook to Agra*, suggested on the basis of a popular tradition that this Diwan-i-Khas might have been the Ibadat Khana, as no other building answering to its description has yet been located at Sikri. This view is, however, untenable, for, firstly, the Ibadat Khana, according to Al-Badayuni, consisted of four spacious halls ; secondly, the Ibadat Khana, according to the same authority, was enclosed in a great quadrangle on the site of the cell occupied by Shaikh Abdulla Niazi Sarhindî, a disciple of Shaikh Salim Chishti, near the new *Khanqah* ; thirdly, a religious assembly of the kind described by contemporary authorities could not obviously take place inside the royal palace, and lastly, the small chamber of this Diwan-i-Khas could not have accommodated the large number of people including the four classes of religious men and nobles and officers of state who thronged the halls of the famous Ibadat Khana to participate in or enjoy the religious and philosophical discussions held on every Friday night and on holy festivals. It is certain, therefore, that the original Ibadat Khana is no more in existence, and may have been either demolished by Akbar himself, or what is more probable, may have been destroyed by the ravages of time.

Today Akbar is no more than a memory, but his buildings such as the Diwan-i-Khas still remind us of the far-sighted and enlightened statesmanship that was his.

## JODH BAI'S PALACE

Jodh Bai's palace which is the largest and most important residential palace at Fatehpur-Sikri is a unique building in some respects. It is a perfect example of a self-contained Mughal residential palace of the sixteenth century. The palace is markedly Hindu in character and it deserves particular attention as a type of architecture characteristic of Akbar's period. In this palace, more than any other, one is inclined to dwell on the domestic life of Akbar. We know that the great Mughal Emperor came to Fatehpur-Sikri so that his wife, Maryam-uz-Zamani, might give birth to a son through the blessing of Shaikh Salim Chishti. After Prince Salim was born, Akbar's first care must have been to erect a fitting abode for the mother of his long-awaited heir-apparent. This partly explains the conjecture that Jodh Bai's palace was meant for the mother of Prince Salim.

Historical evidence, however, does not support the popular tradition, for Akbar had no Hindu wife, named Jodh Bai. A Rajput queen of this name was the wife of Jahangir and daughter of Motha Raja of Jodhpur. She was the mother of Prince Khurram. Jahangir's mother known as Maryam-uz-Zamani was the daughter of Raja Bihar Mal and aunt of Raja Man Singh. The anomaly accounts for the view that this palace may have been built by Akbar for his daughter-in-law, Jodh Bai. But, as Fatehpur-Sikri was deserted in Akbar's own lifetime, how could this palace have been utilized by Jahangir's wife? The only conclusion then appears to be that this palace assigned by tradition to Jodh Bai was in fact meant for no particular queen, and that it was occupied by the principal ladies in Akbar's harem. That it may have been the residence mainly of the Hindu ladies is suggested by the predominantly Hindu style of the building.

### A CONTROVERSY

Is it likely that it was Akbar's own palace? The Rev. H. Heras is responsible for this view. His contention is based

on the following grounds : Firstly, according to the contemporary Jesuit Father Monserrate, Akbar's own palace was the "largest and finest". This description is applicable to Jodh Bai's palace alone. Secondly there is a striking resemblance between the so-called Jahangiri Mahal in the Agra Fort and this palace. Thirdly, it is the earliest building among the large palaces, and it is therefore natural to suppose that Akbar's own palace should be the first building. Fourthly, this palace is situated near the ridge of Sikri where the Emperor spent his time frequently. Fifthly, the proximity of the stables further supports the view, for Akbar was extremely fond of horses. Lastly, Father Monserrate gives some details regarding Akbar's palace. These are applicable to this palace. For example, he refers to beautiful decorations and dome-shaped roofs and pinnacles supported on four columns.

While it is true that the Rev. Heras's arguments are highly plausible, there are certain difficulties which cannot be explained easily, if his theory were to be fully accepted. Monserrate's details are not sufficiently explicit, and some of them are difficult to substantiate. He wrote his account long afterwards from memory, and that may explain some of the apparent confusion. Besides, this large palace with all the distractions caused by the inmates could hardly be the chief residence of a busy ruler. Again, the Jesuit priests could hardly have been allowed to reside in the proximity of the imperial harem, as would be the case, if Monserrate's statement that the priests' house was built against the palace walls be regarded as correct. The theory that Maryam-ki-Kothi may have been the residence of the priests is no less fanciful, for this pretty little house is not built against Jodh Bai's palace. It seems, therefore, safe to assume that though Akbar may have spent some part of the day in this palace, it need not be regarded as his principal abode.

#### INSIDE THE PALACE

The palace consists of a spacious, open court-yard on each side of which there is a suite of single-storeyed rooms and corridors with double-storeyed halls in the centre and corners. The central block on the east side contains the main entrance to the palace. The gateway is extremely attractive,

and is built entirely in the Hindu style, for in the construction no arches are used, and, on the contrary, there are Hindu pillars, brackets and lintels. On the opposite side of the quadrangle, that is on its west side there is an impressive hall which is often supposed to have been used as chapel or "thakurdwara". It is extremely doubtful, however, if it was actually a Hindu temple, but the internal arrangements such as the niches, the stone dais and the ornamentations with such Hindu features as bells and chains create the impression of a Hindu temple. On the north and south the blocks may have served as sitting and retiring apartments. All round the quadrangle there are drains to carry off the rain water and in the centre there is a small tank which, according to popular tradition, was the place for the sacred "tulsi" plant. Or, was it merely a reservoir of drinking water for the pigeons?

There are staircases in the central blocks and these lead to the top. On the north and south the upper chambers have wagon-shaped roofs of stone laid with blue tiles. The upper chamber at the northern side is believed to have been the dining room. The fine hall adjacent to this room is the well-known Hawa Mahal or Wind Palace which is one of the most interesting features of Jodh Bai's palace enclosed by perforated stone screens. Here the ladies gathered to enjoy the cool breeze and have a glimpse of the palace gardens, the lake and the distant hills beyond. The beautiful screens gave relief from the sun and rain and also allowed free ventilation. In front there is an open space, once Maryam's garden, the main attraction of which was the picturesque fish tank sheltered by a handsome pavilion. The stone lattices in Hawa Mahal are of fairly large size and are extremely elegant. A staircase in the vicinity of the screens leads to the raised viaduct connecting the palace with the distant Hiran Minar. This viaduct is supported by piers and arches and is surmounted with domed kiosks at places. The screened passage allowed the ladies to reach the Minar without being exposed to vulgar gaze.

#### INTERESTING ARCHITECTURE

The flat roofs of the single-storeyed rooms on all sides of the quadrangle may have served as promenades for the

women, for the outer walls are sufficiently raised to act as screens. The upper room on each corner is surmounted by a dome decorated with fine medallions. Once the rooms were richly painted, as traces of coloured decorations still show. The lower rooms are also similarly decorated. On the south side there are the palace baths behind the reception room and corridors. The exterior facades of the building are not imposing, but they are simple and in good taste. Four domes which crown the corner halls and the fine balconies which jut out from their upper ends lend a romantic appearance to the whole building.

Architecturally, the design and decorations of the palace are full of interest. The whole plan is based on the Hindu and Jaina styles. There is a marked absence of excessive ornamentation, and the red sandstone palace is on the whole dignified and in sober taste. The simplicity of the architectural design is to a certain extent relieved by rich colour designs. The whole style is Hindu as the absence of arches and free use of lintel, and the presence of the Hindu features like the bell and chain ornament, carvings of birds, heavy brackets and thick drip-stones show. Some of the features are of Jaina origin and are illustrative of the mixed style which grew up during this period in Gujarat. For example, the handsome serpentine brackets remind one of the Jaina temple at Abu or Palitana.

The significance of Jodh Bai's palace lies in the fact that Akbar was an Indian of Indians in his taste for the art of building, and that he did not allow any prejudice or dogma to circumscribe his love of Indian architecture and its traditions. The virile dignity of this palace and its romantic associations are stamped throughout with the impressive personality of a great empire-builder.

## 'THE PANCH MAHAL

The unique five-storeyed pavilion at Fatehpur-Sikri, popularly known as the Panch Mahal, is probably the most striking building in the whole range of Muslim architecture in India. Its conception and design lend it an air of mystery and romance which have given rise to endless speculation about its origin and real object.

If only its walls and pillars could talk what stories could they relate ! But they stand mysterious and mute as they did in Akbar's reign, and the imagination is tempted to visualize the charming princesses who danced up and down its steep staircase with bowed heads and rhythmic footsteps in moonlit nights when the halo of silver light enveloped its topmost kiosk and gently crept downwards to the base of the ground floor and hung a veil of magic charm over the pretty gardens, glimmering courtyards and imposing palaces surrounding it on all sides.

### OBJECT OF THE BUILDING

There is no inscription to explain the object of this building, and so there is a variety of opinions regarding its use. It is believed by some people to have been the pavilion from the top of which the Muazzin called for prayers at the prescribed hours. But, how could the Muazzin be allowed to enter the precincts of the harem ? Some hold that it was meant to be the tower for hanging a bell at the top to proclaim the functional hours of the royal court. Others maintain that Akbar used the building as a watch-tower from which he would watch the distant plain beyond the hills of Sikri. Still others think that it was just a resort for pleasure and rest like the Hawa Mahal in Jodh Bai's palace. While it is difficult to be certain, it seems more probable that it was here that Akbar and the ladies of the harem would enjoy the evening breeze and bask in the cool rays of the moon, reclining languorously on soft carpets while pretty slave-girls

attended on them. Ladies of a less exalted rank would gather in the lower storeys the screens of which allowed free ventilation as well as a full view of the surrounding scene.

The pyramidal plan of the building is suggestive of a Buddhist monastery, each storey becoming smaller than the lower one, until the topmost storey is no more than a dainty and elegant kiosk of a peculiar design. It supports the assumption that Buddhist craftsmen were employed in this construction. It is very doubtful, however, if such a lofty Buddhist Vihara existed in India during Akbar's reign. But, it is not unlikely that Chinese artisans were employed at Sikri and it is probable that the design was borrowed from them. This pyramidal design which is repeated in Akbar's tomb at Sikandra is a curious innovation in Mughal architecture, and is thus full of interest and worthy of close study.

#### THE PILLARS

Standing opposite to the famous Pachchisi Court, the ground floor is divided into cubicles by screens spanning the pillars. It contains in all eighty-four pillars, the first floor fifty-six, the second floor twenty, the third twelve and the topmost storey only four. The variety and artistry shown in the design of these pillars are noteworthy, for they bear witness to the fine taste and remarkable ingenuity of the artisans employed. The ornamentation of the pillars is as superb as it is varied, and the patterns show an admirable synthesis of the features of the three principal styles known to Northern India in those days—Hindu, Jain and Saracenic. In short, the designs clearly illustrate the infinite care that the architect must have bestowed on them. Though the columns on the other storeys are suitable in design those on the first floor are extremely interesting, for each one of the fifty-six columns is differently ornamented both on its cap and base and also on its mouldings so that one can enjoy an almost endless variety of motifs and patterns.

The shafts of certain columns are ornamented with lotus buds at the tops and the caps are carved with plants, etc. The top of one pillar is ornamented with a tree from which a man is seen plucking fruits. It is a typical Buddhist or Jain design. But, usually the designs show an admixture of Muslim taste. Even the column with the aforesaid fruit design is moulded in

Muslim style. Some of the figures on the pillars have been defaced wholly or partly and these show that Akbar did not allow religious puritanism to stand in the way of the craftsmen who had the fullest freedom to work on any pattern or motif they liked. This accounts for the predominantly unorthodox character of the decorations introduced in the whole building. Each storey appears to have been originally furnished with perforated stone screens. Probably, the top storey may also have been enclosed by screens. The idea seems to have been to screen off the Panch Mahal from the open Pachchisi Court and the adjacent Diwan-i-Khas.

#### FEMALE QUARTERS

This extensive use of pierced screens, combined with the fact that the whole pavilion overlooks the *zenana* palace would make it appear that the place was chiefly used as a promenade by the women of the harem. The building is definitely connected with the female quarters and is reached from the Khas Mahal on the south-east corner by a screened causeway. This further corroborates the view that the palace was primarily used by the ladies. Keene suggests that the ground floor with its screened cubicles may have been intended for the palace children and their female attendants. The upper storeys were used by the ladies, according to their status, the topmost one being meant for the principal queen or queens.

What makes the building of surpassing interest to the visitor is its marked Hindu feeling in design and decoration. Unlike a Muslim pavilion, it has no dome or minar, and its construction shows the free use of lintels and pillars in place of arches and domes which are characteristic of the Muslim style of architecture. The carvings are mainly Hindu, such as the bell and chain decorations, animal forms, the lotus motif, etc. Among other Hindu features mention may be made of the heavy drip-stones, the massive brackets, and the design of the various floors. The manner in which these Hindu motifs and decorative designs have been artistically combined with the Muslim, Jain and Buddhist styles shows the composite taste of the great Emperor who is responsible for this unique building. Peculiar as it is of its type, it has no exact parallel among the Muslim monuments of medieval India.

One should visit the Panch Mahal in the fading evening light, or in the rosy hours of dawn. When at dusk the sun sinks behind the high walls of the Jami Masjid, this red sand-stone pavilion is shrouded in dark shades of amber and gold. If you sit under the kiosk on the top storey and watch the surrounding palaces in the twilight of evening, the seduction is subtle and irresistible. The whole background assumes the colour and romance of a magic city produced by some giants in an Arabian Nights tale. In the early hours of morning, when the rising sun is about to cast its rosy light over the eastern horizon, a view of the surrounding country which one gets from the Panch Mahal is an experience that cannot be forgotten. The deserted city of Fatehpur-Sikri looks like a veritable dreamland, and its noble piles and colossal ruins, looking fanciful and mysterious, seem to float on air.

## THE "GOLDEN ABODE"

Of the architectural glories of Akbar's deserted city of Fatehpur-Sikri, the "Golden Abode" or "the Sunahra Makan" is undoubtedly the most poetic in style and lyrical in artistic appeal. Its picturesque designation is justified by the splendid gilding on its walls both inside and out, which gives it the appearance of a colourful picture-gallery glistening like a shining gem in the spacious area set apart for the women of the Emperor's harem. Standing gazing at this pretty structure with the sun sinking behind Jodh Bai's palace adjacent to it, there will be few who would not be visibly moved, and if one stands in the silence of the darkening shadows inside its main hall, he will begin to feel that he is intruding in a fairy palace where once moved about fairy-like damsels who today are merely a memory, and this building remains only to remind us of the aesthetic taste that was theirs.

Opinions differ as to the person or persons for whom this building was meant. Its popular name, Maryam-ki-Kothi, gave rise to the fanciful suggestion that it was the abode of some Christian queen named Mary. But there is no historical evidence to show that Akbar had a Christian wife. Abul Fazl, the court chronicler of Akbar, does not refer to Akbar having ever married a Christian lady. Other contemporary writers and prominent chroniclers also make no mention of this fact. The fable of a Christian queen has received some weight from the presence of a celebrated painting over a doorway, which is supposed to represent the annunciation, but a close examination of this fresco would reveal the fact that the winged figures here represented are of the type usually seen in pictures of stories from Persian mythology.

### VARIOUS SUGGESTIONS

Keene, in his *Handbook to Agra*, suggests that the building was meant for Akbar's cousin, Salima Sultan Begam, granddaughter of Babur. But there is no evidence to support this.

view either. On the contrary, the marked Hindu feeling in the design and decorations definitely militates against Keene's theory. A more plausible suggestion has been put forward by Father Heras who thinks that this building served as the residence of the Jesuit Fathers during their visit to Akbar at Fatehpur-Sikri. This view is based on the testimony of Father Monserrate's well-known Commentary according to which, firstly, the palace where he and Father Aquaviva resided was inside the palace precincts and was built against the palace walls ; secondly, the designation of the building indicates a chapel dedicated to the Virgin Mary ; thirdly, the Capuchin Fathers who came after the Jesuits to Agra refer to this building as the residence of the two Jesuit Fathers, and, lastly, its main hall has the appearance of a chapel, its bare south end serving as the place for the raised wooden altar. The argument of Father Heras fails to be convincing, for the details left by Monserrate are rather confused and some of them are difficult to substantiate. It is indeed unlikely that the Jesuit Fathers would have been allowed to reside in the proximity of the harem. Besides, Maryam-ki-Kothi is not built against Jodh Bai's palace, as should have been the case, if the opinion of Father Heras had been correct.

Havell, in his *Handbook to Agra*, says that the predominantly Persian style of the frescoes shows that it could not have been the residence of Akbar's Rajput wife, the daughter of Raja Bhara Mal, a Kachhwaha Rajput, and the mother of Jahangir. He suggests that it must have been the residence of some queen who had Persian connections. This view is also unconvincing, for the style of painting in Akbar's time was mainly Persian in character, and, in the absence of sufficient evidence, it would be hasty to assume the nationality of the occupant from the technique of the frescoes alone.

#### RAJPUT WIFE'S PALACE

That the building may have been used by Akbar's Rajput wife, the mother of Jahangir, is much easier to explain. Firstly, the queen was actually entitled "Maryam-uz-Zamani" or "Mary of the Age", hence her residence could be correctly called Maryam-ki-Kothi. Secondly, its close proximity to Jodh Bai's palace lends weight to this view. Thirdly, the Hindu character of the building suggests that its occupant may have been a Rajput lady. Fourthly, the drawings such as

*The "Golden Abode"*

those of animal or human forms which are prohibited in Islam could not have been pleasing to a Muslim lady. Fifthly, though small in size, the house is the prettiest among the palaces both in design and decoration and was well-fitted to be the residence of the chief queen, the mother of the heir-apparent. Lastly, the presence of a carved figure on one of the brackets of the verandah, which appears like that of Rama, an incarnation of Vishnu, attended by Hanuman, and standing upon a lotus and holding a bulb of the sacred plant in one hand and his bow in the other goes to corroborate the view that this building was used by a Rajput lady.

The building is two-storeyed. On the ground floor there are four rooms, an oblong one placed north to south and the rest lying at right angles to it at the southern side. Over these three rooms there are three others whence a narrow staircase leads the visitor to the roof surmounted by a beautiful pavilion. There are open verandahs protected by a deep dripstone resting on massive, moulded brackets, decorated with carving Hindu in design. On one of such brackets surmounting the pillar at the north-west corner of the verandah are the carved figures of Rama and Hanuman. Over these figures runs a band of "Kirtimukhas" or gorgon faces, and there is a border of Brahmani ducks just below. Another bracket is decorated with the forms of elephants and a third with a pair of geese.

FRESCO PAINTINGS

The most noteworthy feature of the building is the extraordinary fresco paintings on the verandah walls and on the inner walls of the hall. Akbar appears to have allowed the fullest liberty to his artists in the matter of technique and subject-matter. His was an amazing tolerance and love of art for his day. He was a patron of painting far in advance of his age. The frescoes depict forbidden subjects such as men, angels and animals and this fact proves that Akbar did not allow religious prejudices to circumscribe the freedom of his artists. The pictures were meant to illustrate stories from Persian mythology or from the *Shahnama*. In any case the fresco which has been regarded as an illustration of annunciation indicates a Persian scene, for angels and winged figures are common in Persian fables. The drawings are vigorous and well-executed, and the colouring must have been

rich and refined, as would appear from what has still survived. In short, carvings and paintings combine to produce an effect which is not to be seen in any other medieval Indian monument.

The artistic atmosphere of the "Sunahra Makan" makes it look more like an art gallery than a residential palace. Was it here that the Emperor and the ladies of the harem would come to appreciate the art of the court painters ? This is a speculation which is well worth a consideration.